BALLADS FOR SALE

By AMY LOWELL

THE appearance of a book of poetry by Amy Lowell is an event not only in the literary year but in literary history. 'Ballads for Sale,' her third posthumous volume of verse, contains a notable collection of poems, many of which have never before been printed.

An outstanding feature of the volume is its wide range both of mood and subject—from pictures of Italy to songs of the Pueblo Indian. The book as a whole will take its place as one of the best examples of Miss Lowell's extraordinary variety, vitality, and poetic genius.

$2.25

BALLADS FOR SALE

AMY LOWELL

REFERENCE LIBRARY
BURLINGTON

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO.

TRADE
REFERENCE
LIBRARY

1

Please Return To:
2 Park Street, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

BALLADS FOR SALE

Books by Amy Lowell

PUBLISHED BY

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

Poetry

BALLADS FOR SALE

EAST WIND

WHAT'S O'CLOCK

LEGENDS

PICTURES OF THE FLOATING WORLD

CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE

MEN, WOMEN AND GHOSTS

SWORD BLADES AND POPPY SEED

A DOME OF MANY-COLOURED GLASS

A CRITICAL FABLE

(In collaboration with Florence Ayscough)

FIR-FLOWER TABLETS: POEMS TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE

Prose

JOHN KEATS

TENDENCIES IN MODERN AMERICAN POETRY

SIX FRENCH POETS: STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

BALLADS FOR SALE

BY
AMY LOWELL

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

COPYRIGHT, 1927, BY HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Ballads For Sale

Fresh, New Ballads, with the Ink Scarce Dried upon Them

Have a ballad, good people,

A sheet of song-words just pulled from the press.

A new song all a-flutter in the wind.

Did you hear the drums and fife,

And the boys and girls calling down the side streets?

Throw up your windows,

You, who live in the Square,

For I am passing by your doors

With sheets and sheets of songs,

To tickle your tears and your laughter

And set your feet a-jigging.

Will you have a penny posy of daisies and dandelions,

and true love under a hedge?

For another penny, I can give you roses,

Fountains, fish-ponds,

and a dim old palace streaked with moonlight.

If the sea is your choice,

You must give me silver.

The sea is a hard thing to get into a song.
Martial ballads bring silver too.
They are a bit out of style,
But I have two or three,
with guns popping like the Fourth of July,
Printed in red ink,
with a skull and cross-bones at the corners.
Then there is a merry song of a moor and a cocoanut,
and a clown who went to Heaven in a fire-balloon.
Ha! Ha! You will hold your sides,
and all for a bit of white silver.
But it is yellow gold I must have for love songs,
A drop of blood for a drop of gold,
and fourteen lines is a guinea.

See the wind flutter my songs,
They almost sing themselves out here in the sunshine.
Step up, good people,
And buy a fine ballad crisp from the press,
with the ink scarce dried upon it.

CONTENTS

BALLADS FOR SALE

To a Gentleman who wanted to see the First Drafts of my Poems in the Interests of Psychological Research into the Workings of the Creative Mind 3

On Looking at a Copy of Alice Meynell's Poems, Given Me, Years Ago, by a Friend 9

Who Has Not, Cannot Have 14

Mid-Adventure 16

Correspondence 19

To a Lady of Undeniable Beauty and Practised Charm 21

And So, I Think, Diogenes 22

Mesdames Atropos and Clio Engage in a Game of Slap-Stick 26

A Communication 31

The Immortals 34

Apotheosis 38

Behind Time 47

GOUACHE PICTURES OF ITALY

Palazzo Contarini 63

The Lime Avenue 65

The Water Stair 67

The Stable 69

Fête at Caserta. The Queen of Naples Receives 71

Santa Settimana 73

The Ambassador 75

From Nice to Oneglia 77

Villa Capouana 79

The Church of Santa Chiara, Naples 81

In the Campagna 83

PORTRAITS, PLACES, AND PEOPLE

To Eleonora Duse. In Answer to a Letter 87

To Eleonora Duse. 1923 90

The Madonna of Carthagena 95

Tune 113

Grievance 116

Paradox 118

Hippocrene 120

Thorn Piece 123

On Christmas Eve 127

A New Year's Card 131

Fact 133

Heraldic 134

Quincunx 135

Carrefour 136

Granadilla 137

Caustic 138

One! Two! Three. 139

Alternatives 144

Threnody 145

Tanka 146

Reflection 147

Pastime 148

After an Illness 151

"Rode the Six Hundred" 154

The Silent Husband 155

The "Plum-Blossom" Concubine Writes to the Emperor Ming Huang 156

Old Examination Hall — China 157

Pillar Prints 159

To Two Unknown Ladies 161

Written on the Reverse 173

Silhouette with Sepia Background 179

Aquatint Framed in Gold 182

Miniature 185

Easel Picture 187

The Irony of Death 189

The Grave 191

The Mirror 193

Portrait of an Orchestra Leader 194

Portrait 195

Magnolia Gardens 197

A South Carolina Forest 199

Circus Tents by Lake Michigan 201

St. Louis. June 205

The Revenge 208

Chill 214

Snow 217

Old Snow 221

New Heavens for Old 222

The Sibyl 225

The Madman 227

Dirge 233

Anecdote 237

Epithalamium in the Modern Manner 241

Points of View 243

Shooting the Sun 244

The Customer 246

The Sewing-Book 252

Still Life 255

Ballad of Grinning Death 256

Poetic Justice 263

To Francesca Braggiotti 264

Dance Figure 266

Jazz Dance 271

Proper Invective 278

Dissonance 289

The Book of Stones and Lilies 290

Stalactite 294

The Splendour Falls from Castle Walls 295

SONGS OF THE PUEBLO INDIANS

Women's Harvest Song	303
Basket Dance	305
Women's Song of the Corn	306
Prayer for a Profusion of Sunflowers	308
Prayer for Lightning	308
Flute-Priest Song for Rain	309

Thanks are due to the editors of *The North American Review*, *The Atlantic*, *The Bookman*, *The Dial*, *The Century*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, *Poetry*, *The Anglo-French Review*, *The Double Dealer*, *The Yale Review*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *Books*, *The Boston Transcript*, *The International Book Review*, *The Independent*, *Chimaera*, *Coterie*, *The Forge*, *Prairie*, *The Reviewer*, *Rhythmus*, *Romance*, *Tempo*, *The Harp*, *The Unpartizan Review*, *Varsity*, *Voices*, and *The Forum*.

Acknowledgement should also be made to the editors of *A Miscellany of American Poetry*, *American Poetry — 1925*, *The Year Book of the Charleston Poetry Society*, and, also, to Sunwise Turn, Inc.

BALLADS FOR SALE

TO A GENTLEMAN WHO WANTED TO SEE THE FIRST DRAFTS OF MY POEMS IN THE INTERESTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH INTO THE WORKINGS OF THE CREATIVE MIND

So you want to see my papers, look what I have written
down
'Twixt an ecstasy and heartbreak, con them over with
a frown.
You would watch my thought's green sprouting ere a
single blossom's blown.

Would you, friend? And what should I be doing, have
you thought of that?
Is it pleasant, think you, being gazed upon from feet to
hat,
Microscopically viewed by eyes commissioned just for
that?

Don't assure me that your interest does not lie with me
at all.
I'm a poet to be dissected for the good of science.
Call
It by any name, I feel like some old root where fungi
sprawl.

Think you, I could make you see it, all the little
diverse strands
Locked in one short poem? By no means do I find
your prying hands
Pleasure bearing and delightful straying round my
lotus lands.

Not a word but joins itself with some adventure I
alone
Could attach consideration to. You'd wrench me
flesh from bone,

Find the heart and count its tappings. At your
touch, 'twould turn to stone.

What is I, and what that other? That's your quest.
I'll have you know
Telling it would break it from me, it would melt like
travelled snow.
I will be no weary pathway for another's feet to go.

Seize the butterfly and wing it, thus you learn of but-
terflies.
But you do not ask permission of the creature, which
is wise.
If I did consent, to please you, I should tell you packs
of lies.

To one only will I tell it, do I tell it all day long.
Only one can see the patches I work into quilts of
song.

Crazy quilts, I'm sure you'd deem them, quite unworthy of your prong.

One must go half-way with poets, feel the thing you're out to find,
Wonder even while you name it, keep it somehow still enshrined,
Still encased within its leafage like an arbour honey-vined.

Lacking just this touch and tremour, how can I but shrink and clutch
What I have to closer keeping. Little limping phantoms, such
Are my poems before I've taught them how to walk without a crutch.

You mean well, I do not doubt it, but you're blind as any mule.

Would you question a mad lover, set his love-making
to rule?
With your pulse upon his finger, watch him play the
sighing fool?

Would he win the lady, tell me, with you by? Your
calculations
Might frustrate a future teeming with immeasurable
equations.
Which will prove the most important, your research
or his relations?

Take my answer then, for, flatly, I will not be vivi-
sected.
Life is more to me than learning. If you clumsily de-
flected
My contact with what I know not, could it surely be
connected?

Scarcely could you, knowing nothing, swear to me it would be so.
Therefore unequivocally, brazenly, I tell you "No!"
To the fame of an avowal, I prefer my domino.

Still I have a word, one moment, stop, before you leave this room.
Though I shudder thinking of you wandring through my beds of bloom,
You may come with spade and shovel when I'm safely in the tomb.

ON LOOKING AT A COPY OF ALICE MEYNELL'S POEMS, GIVEN ME, YEARS AGO, BY A FRIEND

Upon this greying page you wrote
A whispered greeting, long ago.
Faint pencil-marks run to and fro
Scoring the lines I loved to quote.

A sea-shore of white, shoaling sand,
Blue creeks zigzagging through marsh-grasses,
Sand pipers, and a wind which passes
Cloudily silent up the land.

Upon the high edge of the sea
A great four-master sleeps; three hours
Her bowsprit has not cleared those flowers.
I read and look alternately.

It all comes back again, but dim
As pictures on a winking wall
Hidden save when the dark clouds fall
Or crack to show the moon's bright rim.

I well remember what I was,
And what I wanted. You, unwise
With sore unwisdom, had no eyes
For what was patently the cause.

So are we sport of others' blindness,
We who could see right well alone.
What were you made of — wood or stone?
Yet I remember you with kindness.

You gave this book to me to ease
The smart in me you could not heal.
Your gift a mirror — woe or weal.

We sat beneath the apple-trees.

And I remember how they rang,
These words, like bronze cathedral bells
Down ancient lawns, or citadels
Thundering with gongs where choirs sang.

Silent the sea, the earth, the sky,
And in my heart a silent weeping.
Who has not sown can know no reaping!
Bitter conclusion and no lie.

O heart that sorrows, heart that bleeds,
Heart that was never mine, your words
Were like the pecking Autumn birds
Stealing away my garnered seeds.

No future where there is no past!
O cherishing grief which laid me bare,

I wrapped you like a wintry air
About me. Poor enthusiast!

How strange that tumult, looking back.
The ink is pale, the letters fade.
The verses seem to be well made,
But I have lived the almanac.

And you are dead these drifted years,
How many I forget. And she
Who wrote the book, her tragedy
Long since dried up its scalding tears.

I read of her death yesterday,
Frail lady whom I never knew
And knew so well. Would I could strew
Her grave with pansies, blue and grey.

Would I could stand a little space

Under a blowing, brightening sky,
And watch the sad leaves fall and lie
Gently upon that lonely place.

So cried her heart, a feverish thing.
But clay is still, and clay is cold,
And I was young, and I am old,
And in December what birds sing!

Go, wistful book, go back again
Upon your shelf and gather dust.
I've seen the glitter through the rust
Of old, long years, I've known the pain.

I've recollected both of you,
But I shall recollect no more.
Between us I must shut the door.
The living have so much to do.

WHO HAS NOT, CANNOT HAVE

Lances slanted against a froward sky,
So do the days of my life appear before me,
O verily Beloved.
Tempt me not, therefore, that I linger
With my long, pointed, red morocco shoes
Scuffing the fallen vine-leaves
A-skip upon the lozenged marbles of your floor.
I am not a man for chess and blue cushions,
For sheep's-eyeing across lute-strings
Of a dapper afternoon.
What were you among the cooks and water-boys,
Camping on a wind-vexed plain at nightfall
Amid the chattering stalks of last year's grasses,
While I, in some lost distance, wage a war
Against the goblins of a mouldering generation?
Would you follow my torn banners where they flicker

In and out of the cloven bellies of mountains,
And the hail-stones gash like javelins,
And the sun dries up the roots of hair
Till my horse is naked as a woman
Bartered for an arid territory?
There are such, my lady,
And I have lands and lances to compel them,
And owe them nothing but a five-petalled kiss
Blooming between a brace of bloody battles.

MID-ADVENTURE

Mist, vapour,
A little whiff of wind,
Noticed as nothing and as soon forgotten,
Such was my purpose.
It would have held, too,
No doubt of that,
And you and I no other than we were.
You would not have it so.
Your call cloaked me in the seeming of reality,
I entered, bidden, to your consciousness.
And here I stand,
Waiting, for so you will for me,
Waiting.
For what?
Would you have me like a caryatid,
Holding above your head some sheltering sky

Of softened, tempered sunlight?

Would you keep me as a gathered curio

To say: "See, this I found, and kept for luck"?

Or do you guess at possibilities,

A warmth to draw from me when nights grow cold

And gales whine bitterly in window cracks?

For myself,

I have lost recollection how I came.

Returning shows a dim, uneasy way

My feet refuse to follow.

Yet suppose,

Suppose the very custom of my long

Vacant delaying just inside the door

Blurs me to an impassive bibelot,

A bit of furniture which, neither used

Nor looked at, is most likely to be left

Totally unregarded and ignored —

My summons nothing,

A caprice outworn —

Standing forsaken in an empty room.

How the wind howls!

The fire is a red recumbent ash.

The future, strange chameleon to the drift of time,

Turns round on me a grinning pasteboard face

Dropped from a masker at a carnival.

Hola! then. I'll be harlequin and dance

In checkers of blood-red and black hearse plumes,

Capering, dead drunk, upon a coffin lid.

CORRESPONDENCE

I WROTE her a letter, she wrote me three,
And the cadence was that of a leafing tree.

I wrote her four letters, she wrote me none,
And the scuffled leaves lay dim and dun.

I broke my pen and wrote no more,
Lacking the postman's knock at the door.

I scored that year with a mark of chalk:
Second-hand compliments, windy talk,

Pleasant platitudes hung on a nail
Useful to plump an uneven sale.

It will all come out in the wash, they say,
And to-morrow but duplicates yesterday.

Even great Pharaoh takes no more room
Than his huddled bones, though the spacious gloom

Containing them goes by his stately name.
Dead leaves, dead kings, it is much the same.

Cocks crow daily on hills of dung,
And no song is the first, nor the last, that's sung.

TO A LADY OF UNDENIABLE BEAUTY AND PRACTISED CHARM

No peacock strutting on a balustrade
Could air his feathers with a cooler grace,
Assume a finer insolence of pace,
Or make his sole advance a cavalcade
Of sudden shifts of colour, slants of shade,
Than you, the cold indifference of your face
Sharpening the cunning lure of velvets, lace,
Greens, blues, and golds, seduction on parade.
You take the accolade of staring eyes
As something due your elegance of pose,
Feeding your vanity on pecks of dust,
The weary iteration which supplies
No zest. I see you as a cankered rose
Its silver petals curled and cracked with rust.

AND SO, I THINK, DIOGENES

I TOLD them to look at an apple-tree
In a gust of blossom. They could not see.

I told them to notice people's faces
In quiet, unexpected places;

To catch the flying speech of eyes,
And stumble on some young surprise

Of joy as sharp as any dawn
Or afternoon across a lawn.

I told them to look at a thin, white steeple
Soaring above a throng of people,

And listen to the people's cheers
When some one spoke. They had no ears.

Instead, they led me to a hill
Above a bay. The noon was still.

The water in the bay was cold;
The hanging air was slack with mould.

Gravestones were scattered through the grass
So close there was no room to pass

For any save the narrow dead
Who need no paths on which to tread.

Each scraggy gravestone bore a name
And some brief episode of fame,

Some pious irony of grief,
Draped in the tatters of belief.

Misshapen flowers stood awry,
Too weak to face the staring sky.

The wind upon that barren hill
Was strangely sleek and strangely still.

A dreary shadow crept and crept
Across the gaunt graves where they slept

Who died so many years ago
And lay here softly, row on row,
With nowhere else at all to go.

* * * * *

They led me up and down the hill.
They said no word. The dusk was chill.

They left me at the edge of town;
They gazed at me and up and down.

Their eyes were ghastly white and cool
Like fishes in a frozen pool.

They left me where I stood, and bent
With feverish ague, turned and went

Back to the hill. "But they are dead,
They do but wander home," I said.

MESDAMES ATROPOS AND CLIO ENGAGE IN A GAME OF SLAP-STICK

"And better there for her than at that inn he left her at to pine and watch the Royal Sovereign come swing come smirk in sailor blue and star and meet the rain."

"THE AMAZING MARRIAGE."

COME swing, come smirk, in sailor blue and star,

And I, poor lad, dead as Balaam's donkey,

Nothing left but a coat and star

And anyone's face clapped on top of 'em.

I was a round chuck-penny for fortune, I was,

A fellow to straddle a quarter deck, step up step down,

Guns, and runs, and the wind's eye winking.

So I stood it, swallowing the harbour jauntings

Like so many puffs of cream,

And off to windward, clip at a black squall

With a snap of my fingers.

Now I'm the laughing-stock of a cat's-paw;

Come swing, come smirk, to every little sniff of air,

Sailor blue and star, up and down,
With my hinges squealing like a cracked serpent,
And every window behind mocking the sight of me
And my silly star, gone no one knows whither.
I was a man to stand the slash of hurricanes,
With a bowsprit of good metal spitting mouthfuls of
water and liking it.
Come swing, come smirk now,
With the black rain snivelling down my front,
And the apple-faced sun wizening me to a cranberry.
Come swing, come smirk, all day long,
Watching a boy jabbing a goose-quill into paper,
By candle-light, when the moon fails,
And Zip! they go out of window like so many fire-
balloons,
And some take the trees, and some foul the mud,
And some give me a pinch in passing.
Once I had a belly-ful of good sea-salt in me,
And a cocked hat of brine to brisk me up,

Me and my star;

Now I eat that fellow's ripped-up papers,

Whenever there's a breeze.

And the sight of him, red-haired ninny,

Sitting there with his head like a bonfire,

And his heart too, I daresay,

Is a bitterer thing to spy at than the march of a China Seas typhoon.

Come swing, come smirk, in sailor blue and star,

To catch the rain, and catch his papers,

Hot to blister the paint off me,

And the white rain spoiling 'em,

And the blue, morning rain sticking 'em together,

And I in the drift creaking my rust at the flight they make.

Faugh! I say,

This is a pretty heaven, this is!

Dead and gone and should be let lie,

Not swinging and smirking after other men's scrib-
blings.
Sailor blue and star,
To tell the world here's an inn to stop at,
And a young fellow blazing his eyes blind in a worm-
hole
After something he can't see.
Pretty world he's made for me to swing in,
Smirking at him with my star that's only paint
When the bells toll of a Sunday,
And a grinning churchyard underneath
Rots the man I was.
Can he cheat it when his time's come,
Or will he, too, be strung up on a pair of whining
hinges,
Sailor blue and star, or something like it?
Ding-dong bell on a sign-board,
And the old goose gobbled full of papers
Waddling down to the ditch.

That's a song for a Sunday morning,
Come swing, come smirk, till your boards give way,
And you go to grind shoe-leather,
And the wind can't peck you from the dust.
Grand world, come swing, come smirk,
Baby Bunting world of painted nonsense,
Up and down to a scrape of rusty bearings
Like a man with a cold at the back of his nose;
Holy-ghost world with a star on it like a cold pancake,
And the devil's beer brewed of sick brains
Which should be let lie and aren't,
And go for the choking of geese
Laid out stark in a green ditch
Of a Sunday morning for the church-folk to see.

A COMMUNICATION

You deceived me handsomely
With your inconsolable grief at parting.
I really believed in your crocodile tears
And suffered at the exhibition of your suffering;
A little for myself also at the breaking of an old tie,
A habit grown as comfortably pleasant
As the wearing of a friendly dressing-gown.
For we had passed the stage of exhilaration
And reached the solace of a quiet domesticity.
I was prepared to linger over it in retrospect,
Not too unhappily, for had we not agreed a thousand times
That this sundering was merely geographical.
And now a month has passed and not a word have I had from you,
Not so much as a scrawl to say you could not write!

Fate lays innumerable springes for persons of imagination.
Because I wished to believe,
I saw in your Byronic gesture of woe,
Not what it purported to be, certainly,
But something not too different.
You cast a larger shadow than yourself, that I realized,
But even I, who should have known better,
Believed it was your shadow.
I crave your pardon for my blunder.
The mask was well assumed,
I should have been critical enough to understand it was an artistic production.
I congratulate you on the verisimilitude of it,
But I shall not be fooled again, be sure of that.
In future I shall see you as you are:
A plaster figure of a man that's grown a little dusty.

We all have knick-knacks round which once meant
something.
It is rather a wrench to take them from their niches,
But life goes on, imperious, and bric-à-brac accumu-
lates.
Still, because I cherished you once, I will not throw
you away just yet.
I will put you on an upper shelf in the pantry of my
mind,
Among old flower-vases I no longer use, being of a
bygone fashion.
It may interest you to know that the place you oc-
cupied
Looks a little strange to me without you,
But that, of course, will pass.

THE IMMORTALS

I HAVE read you, and read you, my Betters,
Piling high on the clear brown shelves,
Mountain high, your very selves
Disguised in a garb of letters.

I have poked and pried beyond,
Seeking past words for how you did it,
While my mind was one tormented fidget
Like a stone-struck, shallow pond.

I have ravelled your patterns out,
And matched them piece by piece as they were,
Till your hearts flashed again from the erstwhile blur.
Did I know then the rule from the rout?

Do I know how a flower comes —
A spurt of blue or a shoot of rose?

Plant a seed and watch while it grows.
Chrysanthemums — geraniums —
Let the scientists crack their craniums!

I know what paper is,
And I've handled pencils, and pens, and ink.
Does grammar teach us the way men think?
Can you narrow a man to a synthesis?

Build him from his parts if you can.
Shade him to colour and cut him to shape,
Docket his method, something will escape,
And, presto! Where is the man?

Two and two make four.
If your two and two will amalgamate,
But who knows the way to add moonshine to paint.
And there we touch the core.

I read you as I look at the sky,
Gratefully wondering at its fresh-flowing blue.
If I'm not, why I'm not, so why this to-do —
Must I disqualify?

Well, I won't, my Masters, so reckon
On the valiant rivalry of a flea.
I should lie to you if I never said "We."
You great gods, why do you beckon?

Clearly the fault is yours,
Flaunting a challenge I can't resist.
I declare my back has a permanent twist,
And my boot-straps are counted by scores.

Out of your anguish we see,
Out of your mighty rejoicing we are.
Your burning has seared us with a bleeding scar,
We strive in irony.

You most Serene and Dead
In your bright gardens! Our Gethsemane
Is planted with your immortality.
We walk with feet of lead.

With leaden feet we move,
And still with heads flung up and bared.
Fools, in that seeing, yet we dared
To follow you and prove.

Prove whether stars or ashes.
That's the touchstone, is it not?
Graven tablets or dry-rot.
Well, the mist has sunny flashes.

APOTHEOSIS

THE mountains were both far and high,
Their jagged peaks along the sky
Broke it like splintered porphyry.

I stood beneath a cherry-tree
Whose thick leaves fluttered ceaselessly,
And there were cherry clusters — three.

Prone at my feet was one who slept;
At my right hand, a maid who wept;
And at my left, a youth who kept

Vigil before a naked sword
Which gleamed and sparkled on the sward
As though it were a holy word.

An eery moonlight lit the place,
Just bright enough to show each face
And each lithe body's proper grace.

The weeping maiden raised her head:
"I die for want of food," she said,
And in her famished gaze I read

The wasting of her life in tears.
Her face was shattered as though years
Had nicked it with an iron shears.

"Peace, Mournful Lady," I replied,
"Within these leaves dark cherries hide."
I raised my hand, but in a stride,

Catching his sword up, so he came,
The youth. His helmet burst to flame,
And on it shone a fearful name.

The maiden moaned and sank beneath
The tree's foot, like a fallen wreath
Of myrtle-buds, stripped of their sheath.

Once more we were as we had been:
One wept, one slept, one watched his keen
Sword lying in the grasses green.

Then she who slumbered stirred and woke,
And throwing back her ample cloak
She lifted heavy eyes and spoke:

"I faint for hunger," whispered she,
"And though above me I can see
Cherries, I am spent utterly.

Reach me the fruit for kindness, so
My blood may once more course and flow

As it was used, oh, long ago."

The words were faint as is the jar
Of air behind a falling star
Felt in a forest where ghosts are.

"Be still," I answered, "if I fail
To succour you, no burning mail
Will be the force to which I quail."

Brave words to whip my spirit on.
Under the leaves the cherries shone.
A moment and I should have done.

But, as the thought came, so did he,
And stood beside the cherry-tree,
And struck his sword upon her knee.

Even while she fell, he went his way,

And laid his sword as erst it lay,
And mournfully awaited day.

Then, drearily, above the rim
Of mountains, rose a sun so dim
I only knew day watching him.

For, as the morning slowly grew,
He took another ghastly hue,
And what was pale had turned to blue.

His corselet was corroded rust,
Between his greaves a briar thrust
Its long head up, his eyes were dust.

His sword still lay upon the ground,
But all at once it moved and wound
Among the grass-blades to a mound

Of heaped-up earth, and entered in,
Inch after inch, for what had been
A sword was now become a thin

Long line of ants, who crawled and went
With the strange, multiple consent
Of myriads working one intent.

Sick and distraught, I turned to where
The weeping maid had been, and there
Was nothing but a gusty air

Which blew upon a ruined town.
Tall girders, stripped of stone, looked down
On crumbled streets where weeds had grown.

A doorway opened a gaunt eye
Upon the rats which scurried by.
A roofless window watched the sky.

And all the frayed and brittle soil
Of that dead city seemed to boil
With insects laden down with spoil.

Again I turned and sought the spot
Where one had slumbered, and my hot
Eyes rested on a graveyard plot.

A devastating plague of sand
Had swept it, piled on either hand
Were broken headstones, and a band

Of plundering ants crept in and out
Among the graves and round about.
The very air smarted with drought.

The valley burned without a sun,
Gasping beneath a twilight, dun

And twitched with heat, through which gnats spun.

And, sweeping it, my eyes could see
No semblance of a cherry-tree,
The plain was flat as plain could be.

But where that long night I had stood
Lay a sarcophagus of wood
Covered with ants as red as blood.

Then suddenly a frozen cry
Tingled along the brazen sky,
And he who uttered it was I.

Tangled in scorching sand I fled.
The mountains closed about my head.
The stifled air proclaimed me dead.

I woke — for I had slept, it seemed.

My head ached and I must have dreamed.
Above me, cherry blossoms gleamed

A slant of whiteness to a sky
So blue it glared bewilderingly.
I crushed an ant and wondered why.

BEHIND TIME

On days when the sky is grey, not blue,
My mind strays back for an age or two,
And amuses itself in a little place
I have made to provide a breathing space
Whenever our twentieth-century air
Heats to a temperature so rare
It stifles fancy, and our thundering cities,
Weighted down by cares and pities,
Load my soul with a heap of dust
Through which no least conceit may thrust
A single stalk or a single bloom
In a free-flung way. Keats made a room
To house him on afternoons like this;
Poe followed him, and created a bliss
Of black and silver furniture;
And Samain, obedient to the lure

Of both these chambers, builded his
Like as a pea, a sort of *bis*
To the others. But Browning broke new ground
In Italy, and what he found
Was "a gash in a wind-grieved Apennine"
With a castle a-top. Now this of mine
Is no rock-perched castle, not even a pink
House of scaling stucco just at the brink
Of a blue Neapolitan bay. Browning's love
Outsoars mine as he soars above
Whatever little there is in me,
I am more modest, as you will see.
My dream is a cottage, trim and neat
As paint can make it, the village street
Runs past, beyond a grove of trees,
But only my gable-ends show through these
To any one walking up and down
The sleepy street of that sea-side town
Where even the fishermen merely fish

When someone's table's in need of a dish
Of oysters, or eels, or cod. My eaves
Peep archly over the bustling leaves
Of Virginia creeper, and down below
The wall-beds glitter with golden glow,
And asters, and black-eyed sun-flowers,
And a strawberry-bush with its dun flowers
That smell of allspice stands at each end
Just where the lawn takes a sudden bend
And turns the corner. A foot or two
From the creaking piazza, a naval review
Of seventy-eights and ninety-fours
Whirls round on a wheel without a pause:
Four-masted schooners luff and jibe,
Fill again with wind, and circumscribe
The limit of their revolution,
And in the centre, the "Constitution"
Points always at the very eye
Of whatever wind is blowing by.

Beyond the lawn, a little cliff
Drops to the shore, held firm and stiff
By rooted broom. The chuckling lap
Of waves on shingle, the sudden flap
Of a fisherman's sail as he hoists it up,
A grumbling rowlock — you may sup
On a sunset silence such as this
Each afternoon. The clematis
Drops a petal on the old sea wall
As purple as the lights which crawl
And melt and flow across the bay,
Whipped green and silver with streaks of grey
Differently mingled every day.
Along the tall horizon slips
A dim procession of sailing ships
So slowly that they scarcely change
Positions from morning till night. The range
Of the telescope planted on the green
Brings illusions of sound where no sound has been,

The bustle of shipboard suddenly grown
Near and clear through the glass half-crown
Of the eye-piece, but take away your eye,
The ships are still as tapestry.
Here is a foot-path, let us go
And see the place where my flowers grow.
Sunken a foot or two below
The bowling-green, my garden lies,
Flanked by hemlocks of every size
Clipped into peacocks and unicorns,
And monstrous dragons for the scorns
Of noble St. Georges. A hedge of thorns
Protects the tiger-lilies set
In rigid rows. The mignonette
Smells sweet, I see a bunch of it
Plucked by a hand which wears a mit,
Just as I see the pansy faces
Peeking from kerchiefs of Mechlin laces,
And note the trace of rowelled spurs

In the monk's-hood bed where a late bee stirs.
Here is a maid and a manikin
Of painted bisque, half-hidden in
An old laburnum's drooping shade.
The little man rests on his spade
And ogles the maiden's broad-brimmed hat
Since he can see nothing of her but that.
Paul and Virginia, he and she,
Mincingly fashioned in pottery.
Now up three steps where the sunlight sifts
Through a thick pleached alley, when one lifts
The latch of the gate, the click as it closes
Is like the snap of buds into roses.
See the little apples are taking shape
And colour above our heads, they gape
And gossip between the latticed leaves.
Look down at your feet where the sunlight weaves
Quaint patterns of stems and fruit and we
Walk round in them deliciously.

Now let us go through my open door
And tread the black-and-white-squared floor
And hang our hats on the horns of a deer
I've put in the corner over here.
Four rooms as uneven as carpenter's rule
Ever dared to leave. The first is full
From floor to ceiling of maps and books;
Poetry mostly, by the looks.
Thick little duodecimos,
Slender cloth-covered octavos,
Musty, and fusty, and fingered all,
Make a faded rainbow of each wall.
Within them, faint as a scent of musk
Are words which glimmer through the dusk
Of that vanished world which lies just over
The hither side of each marbled cover.
The fireplace is low and wide
With a rusty crane against the side
And an oven behind, where I keep my cherry

Brandy. Mahogany, pale as sherry,
My writing-table is; the locks
Are brass in the form of crested cocks.
Here are chairs of red and brown
Crumbling leather, pliant as down;
On the arms is manifest
The very spot where my elbows rest
When I balance my mighty folios
And read of men with timber-toes
Who discovered archipelagoes
Or rotted for weeks in a bear-skin tent
With moss for their sole nourishment
Beneath Auroran boreal
Nights for phantasmagorial
Possession of a goodish slice
Of that part of the earth which is nothing but ice.
Now cross the hall and I'll introduce
You to something else; a ship's caboose
Saved from the wreck of the Minnie B.

Gone on the sands in seventy-three.

Here is a lantern which used to scan

The foaming wake of an Indiaman;

These chessmen were scrimshawed out of the teeth

Of a whale; that knife in its lacquer sheath

Was filched from the deck of a Chinese junk

A half-an-hour before she sunk

With her pirate crew; this necklace of shells

Was strung for the Indian Jezebels

Of Pitcairn Island, who smiled long years

Ago at the "Bounty" mutineers.

The floor of this room seems to careen

Beneath one's feet, and walls of green

Sea-water to dash against the slim

Matched boards of the sides. I hear the swim

Of a deck-wash sliding from scupper to scupper,

And down through the flanges of the upper

Air, faintly flying above the swell,

The everlasting cry: "All's well!"

Or "There she blows!" or "Breakers ahead!"
I wonder if anything's really dead.
Well, well, there's enough of that. In here
Is a totally different atmosphere.
A pretty shape, this room, the leather
Hangings keep out all notion of weather,
They are Spanish, embossed in gold and blue.
That little picture is a view
Of Venice by Guardi, the Piazzetta
In Carnival, a floweret, a
Shimmer, a perfume, an age in petto
Eighteenth century allegretto.
Considerably unlike it hangs
A Turner, where a mountain's fangs
Close over the plunge of a waterfall
With a slant of sunlight striking it all
To the doom of a planet's evenfall.
Jagged, haggard, splintered steep,
Swept with gold above the deep

Abysmal hollow curving under
The bow of the torrent, grim rotunda
Tawny lit and shocked with thunder.
Here's a picture of nothing but the tops of trees,
Wind-blown, cloud overlooked. If you please
'Tis the life-like portrait of a breeze,
No more, no less, what Constable saw
On Hampstead Heath when a brisk cat's-paw
Flurried out of the West-North-West the prize
Of an Autumn morning. I see your eyes
Stray to the corner where stands my spinet.
Suppose we consider it a minute,
Salvator Rosa painted the case
Of satin-wood. Is it out of place
To put a drawing by William Blake
Just above? Does it seem to shake
A symmetry? Perhaps, but it's done.
Observe the rolling, crimson sun
Glitter along the huge outline

Of that weary form, relaxed, supine,
A man on the edge of a rocky world
Balanced above an ocean curled
And frozen. All Eternity
Shouts in that over-borne man for me.
Let us sit awhile and hark to the speech
Of a century beyond our reach,
Colossal, fastidious, witty, brave,
Importuning us from the grave.
Shift on your spindle-legged gold-white chair,
You will not find the answer where
You seek it. Science cannot raise the flap
Between us and these, nor know what gap
Divides Reynolds's, Romney's, Gainsborough's
Population from men like us.
There seems the fragilest sort of partition
Between then and now. By what condition
Do we subscribe to a cruel decree
That what is, for us, is but what we see?

The world shrinks daily; must we confine
Ourselves to a geographer's line,
Choosing our friends by accident
Of almanac? What impertinent
Design is this, which would control
Free intercourse of soul with soul,
Because, forsooth, an airy thing
Brushes us with its bat-like wing,
A thing we cannot see or touch!
Shall such a nothing dare a clutch
At us in passing? So I sit
Considering time and hating it,
Until I glance at that strange clock
Upon the mantel. With a shock,
I see the face is changed, the numbers
Are there no more, something else encumbers
The dial, a half-moon something, writ
About the upper edge of it.
I notice that the iron hands

Point to this crescent, and each stands
Stock still; then I behold the words,
Contrived grotesquely of crossing swords,
And what I read in crimson ink
Is, "It is later than you think!"
I rise and take my latch-key down
And through the peaceful, sleeping town
I walk back to my century,
The dun, dumb years reserved for me
To wander in and call them mine
And be called theirs in every line
Historians may choose to write
Upon my night, my night, my night.

GOUACHE PICTURES OF ITALY

PALAZZO CONTARINI

Beside the high window, but partly withdrawn
And concealed by the fold of a gold-lacquered screen,
This admirable day-bed discovers the sheen
Of its hooped salmon satin and yellowing lawn.

On spindle legs, thin as a spider's, it stands.
The gilding has scaled to a faint silver tone.
A lavender dust, as of hours outgrown,
Drifts past on a quaver of old sarabands.

Bewilderingly fragile, it baffles decay
With the porcelain pinks on the ormolu spray
Twined about the Saxe clock. Hark! the weary sweet
chime

Of the hour it strikes. At precisely this minute
The Duke would declare he was wasting his time,

And the lady half-languidly rise from her spinet.

Poor flesh and blood lovers long dead, the fine bloom
Of your coquetry crumbles and smiles in this room.

THE LIME AVENUE

With a crunching of gravel and flapping upon it
Of scarlet soutanes, down an alley of limes,
Where the tree-boles, as evenly distanced as rhymes,
Cut their long promenade into bars like a sonnet,

Two cardinals whispering under the trees,
Discussing the doctor's last news of the Pope,
And artfully hiding an indiscreet hope
With a long pinch of snuff and its consequent sneeze.

Lowsy eyes, pendant jowls, immense purple-sashed
waist,
Soft labial words dripping out on the taste
Of a greedy ambition. The other — succinct,

Lips of wire, and face all one cold, chiselled piece,
Pronouncing his bribe with each word quite distinct:

"To your connoisseur's palate I offer my niece."

Pope's arms in a moss-confused lozenge, an ache
Of slow wind, and the whine of a gardener's rake.

THE WATER STAIR

UNDER cypresses, ilexes, myrtles, within
Granite edges, or slipped over broad-ended stairs,
Is a moving of water, and large tranquil squares
Stain its umber and gold with a green lily skin.

No splash, just a ripple which jars the smooth air
Into damp undulations. Remote and suspended
Winds pause in the trees, and the shadows are blended
With gleams as of moonlight entangling drowned hair.

Steps — steps — phantom footsteps. They shuffle
and blur
And crowd the wide stairs with an odd, timid stir
Thinly teasing the sense where there's nothing to hear.

Crimson heels, silver clocks, the shock of them whines
With the shrillness of flutes in the thick atmosphere.

Purple flutes fading silver and rose through the pines.

Liquid lap of old water, and I am confused
With the scent of crushed violets my feet have
bruised.

THE STABLE

Two rows of stiff poplars, wind-bitten and grey,
Flank the high-cobbled courtyard in long, serried lines;
And between them the old stable-clock dimly shines
With its cracked yellow dial defying decay.

It was here that six lumbering, thick-barreled mares
Were wont to be harnessed to my Lord's glass coach
When he drove out to call on his neighbours and broach
Some scheme of importance to landed affairs.

Now the leaves of the poplars may settle and fall
And drift where they will in the juts of the wall,
While the grass has half-buried the sharp-pointed stones.

A ripple of pigeons waves over the yard,
And a toothless old bitch, who is nothing but bones,
Growls drowsily at them to prove she's on guard.

With a wheeze, and a whirr, and a horrible catch,
The clock strikes eighteen; it is two by my watch.

FÊTE AT CASERTA

The Queen of Naples Receives

But tickets, of course, at the door of the theatre
Scrutinized by a Lord of the Court. What a blaze
Of wax candles reflected in gilding, a haze
Of cross-lights like a halo! Is this not Caserta?

The pit is a ball-room, the stage a bright stair
Of musicians in livery; the dazzle becomes
An effulgent wax sun where the great kettle-drums
Crown the apex. Can eyesight endure such a glare?

The Queen! Hist! The Queen! Though she's wearing
a mask,
No one can mistake her. She approaches to ask
If the strangers liked France, if they'd met the Dau-
phine?

At midnight exactly, proclaimed by six flutes,
Enter soldiers with plates and a great galantine
Of hot macaroni, with cream and iced fruits.

But the Queen sups on two dishes only, and these
Are prepared by her own special cooks — Viennese.

SANTA SETTIMANA

On a carpeted bench, thirteen well-chosen priests,
All tutored and drilled in an excellent miming.
The Last Supper staged to the sonorous chiming
Of the Pope's special choir in silks and batistes.

His Holiness, bibbed with an apron of lace,
Arises sedately from his great purple chair
And draws off thirteen socks leaving thirteen feet bare,
Washes each in a basin of gold, and with grace

Presents thirteen bouquets, and a paper of coins,
Returns to his carved purple chair, bows, and joins
His well-mannered hands in a semblance of prayer.

Thirteen silver plates laid on exquisite lawn,
Thirteen eager priests' noses snuffing the fare:

Herring salad, broccoli in oil. And each pawn

Gulps the wine the Pope pours. While behind, the
Pope's guards,
In a stiff inattention, plan their next game of cards.

THE AMBASSADOR

Coat of purple stamped velvet, satin breeches to
match
Of the same sober, elegant hue, white silk stockings
Of a texture so fine that their silver-thread clockings
Seem embroidered on nothing. A great gold-sealed
watch.

The slightly bull neck is concealed by the fall
Of a cascade of point-lace imported from Brussels,
And ruffles of lace at the sleeve-ends hide muscles
Too thick for a man who would shine at a ball.

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur aims at all things, it seems:
Wit, duellist, banker, his lottery schemes
Are the whisper of Paris. He glitters to-day

Sardinia's envoy to France, whose finesse
Has taught him the power there is in display;
Note the painstaking fanfaronade of his dress.

That coat was embroidered in China! His air
Is a trifle bombastic as he walks up the stair.

FROM NICE TO ONEGLIA

An astonishing view, she regards it with eyes
All astare at its glitter and space. Where the sea,
Creeping up to the cliffs, leaves a foot or two free,
Runs the path she is following with such gay surprise.

A lady, a Countess, whose long flowing habit
Proclaims her as English by every known rule,
Perched up on a deft little mouse-coloured mule
Stepping daintily, softly, as any jack-rabbit.

What a heavenly journey, this coming by land
From Nice to Oneglia, outriding her train!
She is vastly amused — why, even the sand . . .

The mule shies, she pulls him up sharply and sees,
Just over the edge of her tightly held rein,

A skull, water-washed, grimly bright in the breeze.

The guide, coming up, shrugs his shoulders with shady Indifference, "It's only the pirates, my Lady."

VILLA CAPOUANA

In the grounds of the Villa Capouana where now,
By municipal order, is a vast cemetery,
The noble and good rest in row after row,
But a single great grave, far more spacious and airy,

Is allotted to those so unwise as to die
Or be killed out of spite in the late revolution.
Here they lie in a heap underneath the blue sky,
A heap of white bones in a mixed distribution.

What excellent playthings! Giannina has wound
A thigh-bone in bright purple rags. "This," says she,
"Is Brighella." And Tito, having pulled from the
mound

A great hollow skull, gathers violets and yew

To put round its head. "See, a King, now he's
crowned,
And the King asks Brighella to a monster review."

So the children set arms, fingers, jaws, in platoon,
And play soldiers and kings all the long afternoon.

THE CHURCH OF SANTA CHIARA, NAPLES

THE day has arrived when the marvellous earth
Beneath Santa Chiara has leave to exhibit
The dead it preserves in the stature and girth
They displayed when alive, which most earths prohibit.

Since even such dead cannot stand, they are held
By a rope round the waist concealed by their dress.
To be sure they loll oddly, as though they rebelled
At this forced resurrection in its full loathliness.

But the populace, come by the dozens to see
Its neighbours and friends, comments in high glee:
"Look at Niccolò Baldi, how rakish he looks.

That's because Margherita hangs her head right beside him.

She is teasing him still, though they're nothing but spooks."

"She's a fright now, at least. I could never abide him."

"Nor he you, I believe." They titter and leer.

Too bad such a show comes but one day a year.

IN THE CAMPAGNA

With his wide crimson cloak and his cardinal's hat,
Like an emphasized flower, amazing the grass
Of the Autumn Campagna, he stands with his fat
Fingers quick on the lock of his gun and the glass

Which is tied to an owl on a perch glints and glitters
Attracting the larks and the finches that fly
In a dazzling confusion of wings and sharp twitters.
The cloud of them hides several yards of blue sky.

Behind him, two liveried grooms load fresh guns
And watch larks and goldfinches fall in dozens,
quenched suns
Attesting his skill, for the Cardinal's game

Is how many small song-birds he can take as his booty

Without shooting the owl who is flustered though
tame.
A rare sportsman this Cardinal in his moments off
duty!

To-night at the Contessa's supper he'll boast
That she owes to his prowess the larks served on toast.

PORTRAITS, PLACES, AND PEOPLE

TO ELEONORA DUSE

In Answer to a Letter

"Regrets and memories these short December days."
How the words cut and scar themselves
Across my heart!
Dear lady of the great compassion,
All tenderness enmeshed in withes of truth,
Experience harboured for its seeking flame,
Clean burning flame of knowledge beyond thought,
Sword-blade of sheerest beauty,
As the sun sinks wanly,
Branch by branch,
Through the shaking, leafless trees,
How cruelly the twilight comes —
I watch it here,
At this long distance from you,
And rage at impotence

Which can give you no brighter present
Than the flicker of a small red candle
Lit by you long ago.
You wrong yourself dwelling upon the past;
I have it from your lips:
"The past is dead. The future alone has life."
The past is dead, save in the continuity
Of your most inaccessible loveliness.
Where touch is healing should be no regret
At that which makes it so.
You walked, and walk, incarnate soul
Of human needs and meetings.
The sight of you is the clarity of courage;
Your movements, insistent, compelling, muted
trumpets in a still air;
Your voice, ah, dear, that voice, as April rain
Dropping at evening on beds of unsprung tulips.
Where has there ever been a flesh
So rightly framing such a spirit? Tell me.

You cannot.

Words are pebbles,

A gravel-path for you to tread and spurn.

Music is liker to encase your essence,

Yet you escape, for what you really are

Hangs to no swiftest flash of evocation,

But floats in rondure of its perfectness

Out of our sight as possible, impossible,

Peak of a human capability,

Infinite spirit with the lightest shadowing

Of merciful and finite flesh.

Has any one ever so held the cords of life,

Of all our lives, as you?

You dare not say there has and gaze truth in the eye.

Look back, then, if you must,

But see plain fact,

Yourself the soul's wine of a generation,

The whispered bourne of blessings to a world.

TO ELEONORA DUSE

1923

If you believed my words,
O tragic, incommunicable lady,
Would they lure you for an instant
From your long, rapt contemplation
Of the sunset-tinted clouds
Lowering in grim and huddled splendour
Over the broken turrets of your ruined sorrows?
Dead to the sting of anguish,
The misery that you ache no more
Is aching so preponderant and huge
You walk within it as an atmosphere
And breathe its bitterness like some gaunt poison
Easing you into numbness
Even of its slow insidious advance.
Where grief has watched

Sits now the ghost of grief.

Where tenderness once held out arms to gather

A universe's loneliness,

Reigns now a weariness of feeling,

A kindliness too spent to give itself,

To smile less calmly than a sculptured saint

Enduring anthems in an incensed niche.

The small dried cones of my fardel of years

Make a poor faggot to light before you,

And yet if you believed them wood not wax

Might not the little raw flame of them

Warm you to a single throb of your lost life?

I see you there before me,

Distant as the shattered past, the shapeless future.

The sprig of your sowing withers in my hands,

Your remoteness is too vast to cherish it.

See, I place it where your somnambulistic feet

May tread upon it

Crushing its fragrance to play round your dreams

I could give much,

Give back what you will not believe your own,

Give laughter, tears.

I am not poor in such,

Richer than you are now, perhaps.

You put me by

Gently, as something in your path

Which, scarcely seeing, yet you brush aside.

You hurt less in the days of your revolt

Than in this quietude of charity.

The sight of you is piercing as a cry,

Your loveliness betrays my eyes to tears,

They smart in falling.

I am no hero-worshipper,

Yet for your sake I long to babble prayers

And overdo myself in services.

Is this not love, then?

May I not write myself disciple, follower?

Unworthy, doubtless, but authentic grain

Sprung from your scattered seed?

Yet you smile and say:

"Of course, it is not true."

If this be not truth,

Then truth and I have never made a company.

You want no service, no compassion, no refreshment.

Tranquillity you think you have, or call it so,

I call it poison dripped from traitorous urns.

You pass me like a legend sprayed with flowers,

The legend of my youth, and now henceforward

Of my age.

Pass, lady,

To whom I can give nothing, nothing.

Yet here again I say it,

With the doggedness of custom grown inveterate:

What you gave I give back again and shall,

Along the smooth years where you wander now,

Perfectly heedless of your heedlessness.

Truth is a brazen thing, and I,

Banging against the brass of utter fact,
Do make perhaps a horrid din
To your peace-longing ears.
So be it, I am silent,
But still here, believed or not,
A chance creation not at all desired,
Yet so existing while our double names
Shall carry any meaning to men's minds.

THE MADONNA OF CARTHAGENA

WHERE a chain of sandy beaches
Cuts across an open sea,
Blue as asters, pink as peaches
Out beyond the farthest reaches
For a distant eye to see,
Every colour that one wishes
May be witnessed hereabout
From the sand-dunes to the ocean.
If the tide is going out,
There are sea-gulls in commotion
Flying over where a fish is;
In a pool as green as grass
Crimson shatterings may pass
Or a blackness blowing over
Quench the colour like a cover;
And the fronds of water-weeds,

Thick as leather, wave and feather,
Tossing stems blown out with beads
As wave after wave recedes.
If the tide is coming in,
What a thunder! What a din!
With the slappings and the swishes,
Creeping slowly and a thin
Line of little forward breakers
Licking onward up the sand
Like the fingers of a hand
Tapping where they'll soon be takers
For the sea has grabbed the land.
Up beyond the sand and eel-grass
Is a sunny little town
Built of palm-tree and palmetto.
It's a city here *in petto*,
With its huts all golden brown,
And above, upon the thatches
Of its roofs are purple patches

Where the bougainvillea's sown
Light-heeled seeds to wax and bloom there,
Always finding ample room there
For the forest's fleecy down.
Here were Indians long ago
In the days before a prow,
Topped by carven saint or sinner,
Sailed across the Spanish Main.
When the caravels and galleons
Of an overweening Spain
Had not found the precious metals
Of the Incas, or in vain
Wasted men and blood and treasure
Forcing Indians from their leisure
Just to glut the greed of gain.
When the opal orchid petals
Were no scientific find,
But a shimmer in the wind.
Ere the feet of dappled stallions

Set the print of iron shoe
On a sandy sunken shore,
But the dappled stallions waited
All in vain, for they were fated
To recross the sea no more.
And their masters often died
Waiting with them, side by side,
An emaciated crew.
All that happened long ago.
Now the vessels, to and fro,
Come as punctually as clock-work
Or at least they mean to do.
And they carry under hatches
All things needed by the cities
They have planted on the sands.
And the monasteried monks,
Hearing tales in quiet cells,
Whispered low in broken snatches
To an undertone of bells

From some wanderer overseas,
Find their hearts moved by strange pities
At the listening to these,
And they volunteer in bands
To convert the simple dwellers
Of these unimagined lands,
Worshipping as they should not.
Manner bringers, pardon sellers,
Vessels carry them in hordes
With a zeal that's piping hot.
Bishops lay aside their croziers,
Hew palmettos into boards,
Build them churches as a duty,
Fill them with whatever booty
They can find of silk or wax,
Woölen fabric, cloth of flax,
Goods of tailors, mercers, hosiers,
In the bottoms that come in,
And for payment wink at sin.

So the church grows, hung with feathers
Woven by the tired Indians,
Lined with these and Spanish leathers,
For at bargains none are keener
Than the potentates of churches.
So it was with Carthagena.
On a hill that rises straightly
From the town, it stands in stately
Isolation, gazing far
All across the stretching ocean.
Privateers and men of war,
Lost in reckoning, see its spire
Burning like a sacred fire
From the broad-leaved palms which rise
Just to where the windowed eyes
Stare forever out to sea.
And the captain calls his people,
Points to where that far-off shining
Glitters like a distant star,

Tells them, not without emotion,
That he knows now where they are,
They may cease their long repining
For that shimmering has been a
Joy to many, 'tis the steeple
Of the Church of Carthagena.
Sailors call the sunny flame
By another, fragrant name:
When the sparkle in the sky
First appears, they raise a cry
"Look! It is our Lady's eye!"
"The Madonna of the Ships" —
So she is to sailors' lips.
And indeed she is a sweetly
Lovely image, most discreetly
Veiled in gauzy stars and roses
With an iridescent cloak,
Made, at least so one supposes,
Noticing its changing sheen —

Ruby sometimes, sometimes green —
Of the wings of humming-birds.
From the hem of it, there poke
Little shoes of gold and blue,
Sewn with gems, not one or two,
But a toe-full flashing through
The beholder's head as though
He were watching the rainbow.
On her head a crown is set
Where great moons of carven jet
Are in fact no jet at all,
But black opals; and the fall
Of her wimple wrought of lace
Half obscures her wondrous face.
Only half, for there's her mouth,
And her nose, an awkward feature
For so heavenly a creature:
There's a sauciness of shape,
And the tip points upward slyly,

But her mouth is most demurely
Small and wistful, yet to see it
Is to know a sudden drouth.
But the priest, who's old and wily,
If you question him says, "Surely
God has ordered, and so be it!"
Glorious, excellent Madonna,
She of ships, and furious oceans,
Here at the Antipodes,
How should she resemble these
Dim Cathedral Virgins, hearing
Ancient fly-blown sins forever,
Snivelled into their dull ears
For eternities of years.
Sins here have a different flavour.
We must cast our hide-bound notions
Of her manner of appearing.
Here she is in perfect semblance
Of what she should be, her lips

Frame her name, or its resemblance:
"The Madonna of the Ships."

But there is a curious story
You may hear about the streets.
Though they tell it to her glory,
Every second man one meets
Winks his eye when you address him
Speaking of her brave attire,
And if you go on and press him,
He will cross himself and say
'Tis no wonder, for the day
That the pirate ship caught fire
At the entrance of the bay
Was when last the priests arrayed her
Newly for a festival
Offered for the town's escape
From a sacking; they displayed her
In the morning. All agape,

Lacking reason's wherewithal
To digest this information,
You may beg for farther light
On so dim a revelation.
But your man is nothing loth,
For his city's praise and pride,
To detail upon his oath
What no citizen will hide:
The possession of a Blessing
Such as nowhere else can be,
Not in any place soever
All along that spacious sea,
At no river-mouth or harbour
Of that many-harboured sea.
So you learn that that same night
For a space of several hours
The high altar was deserted,
Not a trace of waxen image,
Only dropped and withered flowers

Shaken from her feather cape.

Then the church's doors were closed,

But a panic was averted

For the priests gave out she dozed

Being weary. All that night

The priests knelt and said their masses,

Swung their censers left and right,

Moved before the empty altar

With their passes and repasses,

And their sacred psalms and droning.

A great wind outside was moaning,

And the whirled palmettos scratching

On the walls, their great leaves catching

In the flimsy window shutters.

Streams of rain poured from the gutters.

One young priest began to falter

Fearing doom or miracle,

Or a Demon out of Hell.

But his fellows chanted on

Orison for orison.

Suddenly a fearful gale

Shook the church, and furious hail

Rattled on the wooden roof,

Like a squad of eager devils

Spitting flame from horn to hoof

Showering down a thousand evils.

And a window burst asunder.

There was heard a peal of thunder,

A distracting, dooming thunder,

Bearing omen in its rolling,

Tolling dolefully and slowly,

While the church stood slightly under

This reverberate and wholly

Overhanging dome of thunder.

Every joist and rafter quivered,

And the leather hangings shivered.

So protracted was the thunder,

Such an everlasting thunder,

That the priests both old and young
Were quite paralyzed of tongue,
And they ceased their weary singing,
Saying nothing after that.
Truth to tell, they fell down flat.
Each one wanted to be hid,
None saw what the others did.
Each priest's eyes were shut, each prayed.
But the storm seemed to be laid.
For a perfect calm was there,
Not a flutter nicked the air
Which appeared to hold its breath
Folding round them like a wreath
From the open window where
The palmetto leaf hung in
Still as stone, but dripping wet.
And the dripping made a noise
Like a nail which strikes on tin
Or a tinkling little bell

Palpitating for a spell
From some lonely hermitage
At the bottom of a dell.
And the pause endured an age,
Till each priest was moved to see,
Dared once more to look and see,
What that tinkling noise might be.
And they saw the altar set
For high mass and on it standing
Their dear Lady, and her poise
Was that of a flying gull
Just an instant after landing.
The priests gasped: "A Miracle!"
Sobbing, kneeling down before
Their Madonna, on the floor.
But the image made no sign,
Only her far-looking eyes
Gazed upon them with benign
Pleasantness, as one who sighs

And, in sighing, smiles again,
Pitiful to mortal men.
But they might not long indulge
Their great wonder and alarm,
Which no telling may divulge,
Seeing her escaped from harm.
For the old priest bade them haste
To relieve their Lady's plight
From the ravage of the night.
She was mud from foot to waist,
In her crown long weeds were tangled,
One of her bejewelled shoes
Was not there, and sea-shells jangled
Caught upon her feathered dress.
No time this to stare and pray,
Even though the wits confuse,
She must be well comforted,
Cherished, cosseted, and tended
Now her voyaging is ended,

Bathed, and combed, and clothed, and fed
With the sacred wine and bread.
Awed before her holiness,
Frightened priests ran to obey,
Getting in each other's way
In their eagerness to serve her,
Be the one most to deserve her.
In the end the task was done;
And the instant that the sun,
Calculated to exalt her,
Shone upon the wooden altar,
There they placed her reverently,
Crossing breast and bowing knee
To their "Lady of the Sea"
Blazoned in new finery.
When the clock that hung inside
The tall steeple stood at ten,
The church door was opened wide,
Everyone could enter then,

And the priests were told the news:
How the pirates nearly came
To the city, when a flame
Burst up from their nearing ship;
How they let the cable slip
Trying to put the fire out;
How the ship went on the shore
Lacking room to put about;
That the drowned were a full score,
And the others clapped in jail.
So the populace filed slowly
Past the altar, meek and lowly,
Saying "Mary, Mary, Hail!"
And the young priest, cold and pale,
Whispered the thing that befell,
How it was a miracle!
But the old priest said, "'Tis well,"
Joining ancient finger-tips,
"Bless our Lady of the Ships!"

TUNE

THERE'S a lilt abroad in my head to-night
Like a nodding columbine,
It joins to no words, it draws no breath
From any idea of mine.
Yet it crosses and recrosses through my brain
With a sweetness of mulberry wine.

There are tapping red heels in the heart of this tune,
And the flirt of flickered fans,
There are meadows a-spray with a buttercup June
And halted caravans,
Where a gipsy fiddle cries "down the middle"
To a light that is Aldebaran's.

'Tis a tune to wake mummied kings and make
Fra Angelico's angels by scores

Cease their harping and hymns and indulge in the whims
Of a *bal masqué*, Louis Quatorze,
Where the little devils of rhythm perch
On the shoes of ambassadors.

Pavans? No! No! Nor sarabands,
Nor minuets for me.
But capriccioso, a stamping bolero
With a crowd come in to see,
And the moon winking over a curtain's edge
Like a peeping Tom Mercury.

Not a thought, no words, not anything
But a lilt in my head to-night.
Inconsequent as a butterfly's wing
Or the skim of a meteorite.
Put me down as the slave of a toss and a tune
A humble neophyte

With the trees and the breeze, as Terpsichore's
Dedicate eremite.

But, listen, the gusty wind is hushed,
The corn is stiff and still,
The moon like a beetle upside down
Sheds no more light on the hill,
And a little goblin spirited thought
Steals in against my will
Arousing me to the sight of inimical day.
Give the goblin creature its breakfast then, I say,
And loaded with morning I crawl upon my way
To the world where men ravel and rave but none of
them dares to play.

GRIEVANCE

All these years I have remembered a night
When islands ran black into a sea of silk,
A bay and an open roadstead set to a shimmer like
cool, white silk
Under an August moon.
Trees lifted themselves softly into the moonlight,
A vine on the balcony glittered with a scattered bril-
liance,
The roofs of distant houses shone solidly like ice.
Wind passed,
It touched me.
The touch of the wind was cool, impersonal;
The fingers of the wind brushed my face and left me.
I remember that I shivered,
And that the long, continuous sound of the sea be-
neath the cliff

Seemed the endless breathing of the days I must live
through alone.
I grieve for that night as for something wasted.
You are with me now, but that was twenty years ago,
And the future is shortened by many days.
I no longer fear the length of them,
I dread the swiftness of their departure.
But they go — go —
With the thunderous rapidity of a waterfall,
And scarcely can we find a slow, cool night
To consider ourselves,
And the peaceful shining of the moon
Along a silken sea.

PARADOX

You are an amethyst to me,
Beating dark slabs of purple
Against quiet smoothnesses of heliotrope,
Sending the wine-colour of torches
Rattling up against an avalanche of pale windy leaves.

You enter my heart as twilight
Seeping softly among the ghosts of beeches
In a glade where the last light cleaves for an instant upon the swung lash of a waterfall.
You oversweep me with the splendid flashing of your darkness,
And my flowers are tinted with the light of your thin grey moon.

An amethyst garden you are to me,
And in your sands I write my poems,
And plant my heart for you in deathless yew trees
That their leaves may shield you from the falling snow.

Open your purple palaces for my entertainment,
Welcome my feet upon your polished floors,
And keep in your brazier always
One red hot coal;
For I come at the times which suit me,
Morning or evening,
And I am cold when I come down the long alleys to
you.

Clang the doors against the multitude who would
follow me.
Is not this my chamber where I would sleep?

HIPPOCRENE

With you,
I sup on singing birds
And drink hot sunlight cooled with clouds.

With you,
I ride the slanting winds,
Toss coloured balls back and forth over the moon,
Swing up through trees,
And slide down swiftly upon beds of irises.

When you are here,
we stack words at the end of a rainbow
And bowl at them with swans' eggs.

We run races through grass
to old bronze temples,

And sitting under marble porches,
Count daisy petals
to the tapping of a bell.

We leap from steeples,
And land in flowered palaces.

In cedar-scented parlours you tell me tales,
Long, slow tales,
strummed lightly on a lute;
And I lie on blue cushions and watch the sea
and hear your voice.

With you,
I do all these things —
How therefore should I care
to gabble with the donkey-men,
To gossip with the old women
who sell turkeys,

To watch my next-door neighbour plait her hair
and lament the untoward price of butter.

Until you come I will sit here
alone, by a quiet window,
And, with a fine brush,
trace little pictures
To show when you return.

THORN PIECE

CLIFFS,

Cliffs,

And a twisted sea

Beating under a freezing moon.

Why should I,

Sitting peaceful and warm,

Cut my heart on so sharp a tune?

Liquid lapping of seething fire

Eating the heart of an old beech-tree.

Crack of icicles under the eaves,

Dog-wind whining eerily.

The oaks are red, and the asters flame,

And the sun is warm on bark and stones.

There's a Hunter's Moon abroad to-night —

The twigs are snapping like brittle bones.

You carry a lantern of rose-green glass,
Your dress is red as a Cardinal's cloak.
I kneel at the trace of your feet on the grass,
But when I would sing you a song, I choke.

Choke for the fragile careless years
We have scattered so easily from our hands.
They flutter like leaves through an Autumn sun,
One by one, one by one.

I have lived in a place,
I shall die in a place,
I have no craving for distant lands.
But a place is nothing, not even space,
Unless at its heart a figure stands

Swinging a rose-green lantern for me.
I fear the fall of a rose-green gate,

And the cry of a cliff-driven, haunted sea,
And the crackle of ice while I wait — wait!

Your face is flowers and singing sun,
Your hands are the cool of waters falling.
If the rose-green bars should drop between
Would you know that I was calling?

For the stars I see in that sky are black.
The kind earth holds me and laughs in my ear.
I have nothing to do with the planet's track,
I only want you, my Dear.

Beyond is a glaze, but here is fire,
And love to comfort, and speech to bind,
And the common things of morning and evening,
And the light of your lantern I always find.

One or the other — then let it be me,

For I fear the whirl of the cliff-wrung sea,
And the biting night. You smile at my fears,
But the years — years —
Like leaves falling.

ON CHRISTMAS EVE

WHAT is the thing I would say to you
Ere the time when we can say nothing at all,
Neither you to me nor I to you,
And between us is sprung a smoky wall?
If I am left, I shall push the mist
And crack my eyes to a gimlet point
Striving to pierce its every twist
And bore a hole through some weakened joint.
But I know very well it will disappoint
My keenest urge, and I shall be left
Baffled, forsaken, and blind to boot,
But with still the feeling that in some cleft
You linger and watch and maybe hear
The dim and feeble substitute
For speech which may travel from sphere to sphere
And hold itself perpetual
Merging the there and here.

I am counted one who is good at words,
And yet, in placing my thought of you
Where I can see it, hard and clear,
This, that, and the other, in review,
I think that only the songs of birds
Are adequate for the task which I
Can never even make the attempt
To come at ever so haltingly.
I earn my own contempt
That I should presume to try.

You have lifted my eyes, and made me whole,
And given me purpose, and held me faced
Toward the horizon you once had placed
As my aim's grand measure. Your starry truth
Has shown me the worm-holes in Earth's apple,
You have soothed me when I dared not look,
And forced me on to seek and grapple

With the nightmare doubts which block the ways
Of a matrix-breaking, visioning soul
When, lacking the arrogance of youth,
I started to carve the granite days
Into tablets of a book.

The hundred kindly daily things,
I have numbered them all though I may not speak
them.
Sitting here on this Christmas Eve,
I think of you asleep above,
And the house has a gentleness which clings,
And a wide content of love.
What you have said and what you have done,
I should not have known enough to seek them,
But now the very rooms you leave
Have a peace which hangs like a hyacinth scent
All about them.
Your ways, your thoughts,

I would surely rather lose the sun
Than be without them.
So absolutely is it I am bent
To know how you are excellent.

Dearest, I have written it down
For your Christmas Day, but not half is said.
I might write so long it would span the town
And yet scarce mention more than a shred
Of you and you, and you and me;
And of all that I know so well to be,
How wretchedly I have scratched the stone!
You must know the end instead.

A NEW YEAR'S CARD

EVERYONE has his fancies, I suppose,
And to-night I should like to walk round a towered city
Blowing a blue silver trumpet.
Then, when all the people had run out
To see me circling the walls
Playing on a blue trumpet,
I would stop and sing them a song all about your loveliness.
I would make it of the flicker of the air and the sweep of the sun,
And when I had finished, they would see you sitting on a cloud
And know how far you surpassed others in everything.

But there is no towered city,
And I have no blue trumpet,
And those who meet you seem to feel about you much
as I do without the aid of these accessories,
Which proves how very useless a thing a poet is, after
all.

FACT

Sea-roses blowing on a high, white cliff
Rayed out above their leaves, bent by a whiff
Of salty wind. White snowdrops over snow.
The colour of a field where violets grow.
The tingling rings of honeysuckle bines.
Cloud shadows drawing over Apennines.
Young paper birches, with their lustred stems
Brightening old woods. . . . But similes like these
Are stock in trade with all poets. If you please,
Therefore, we'll put aside such brummagems
And merely state a proven certainty,
Which is that you are fine exceedingly
And all that matters in Heaven or Earth to me.

HERALDIC

I HAVE often a vision of your face,
Seen through the crossing branches of young trees.
Your face, as a white, flowing water,
At a little distance, beyond the reeds of a shallow shore.
Ironical, my lady, that Spring, the barb and whetstone of my love,
Should net you from me in leaves and whisperings!
Yet I would not lose even this,
Although the sight and leashing tease me to madness.

QUINCUNX

A LADY was given a shell which kept in its convolutions
The dash and sucking of waves.
At first the lady played with it,
Putting it to her ear.
But soon tiring of this,
She gave it into the hands of a skilful carver
Who fashioned out of it an intaglio of great beauty;
This the lady set in a band of gold
And placed in a cabinet for all to admire.
Now people praise the delicate gem and pass on,
And it lies on its velvet,
Flat, and cold, and admirable;
But the fresh sound of waves
Is no longer about it.

CARREFOUR

O You,
Who came upon me once
Stretched under apple-trees just after bathing,
Why did you not strangle me before speaking
Rather than fill me with the wild white honey of
your words
And then leave me to the mercy
Of the forest bees.

GRANADILLA

I CUT myself upon the thought of you
And yet I come back to it again and again.
A kind of fury makes me want to draw you out
From the dimness of the present
And set you sharply above me in a wheel of roses.
Then, going obviously to inhale their fragrance,
I touch the blade of you and cling upon it,
And only when the blood runs out across my fingers
Am I at all satisfied.

CAUSTIC

CERTAINLY you gave me your heart,
I don't in the least deny it.
And a splendid heart it was,
Of white sea jade strewn over with ochre shadings and
polished to the tip touch of brilliance.
I strung it on my watch-chain.
But then, I seldom wear a watch nowadays;
I do not need it to tell that the black sun
Is sinking into a sea of garnet flame.

ONE! TWO! THREE!

Poems,

Poems,

What are poems but words

Set edgewise up like children's blocks

To build a structure no one can inhabit.

I fling you words,

Raw and bleeding

Out of my desolation.

Tock! Tock! The clock is no more monotonous than I,

Beating your name to every new vibration,

Aching upon remembrance with a durability

Which wears a knife-edge all along each shouting nerve.

Day and night wind round upon my loneliness

Coiling me in a serpent strangle of time.

One morning opens like another:
Sun on each wet bush and tree;
They laugh and rustle,
But I shut my eyes.
How wide the sky is!
And all that way the sun must go
Before another day will have been ended.

Lamps, work, and sunrise,
And again — again —
Always again, and each day tastes like powder
Brittle and salt.
And each night goes like water
Weeping along a heavy wall of stone.

And nothing comes.
It cannot come,
Since you are all that ever could have come.
I count them — one, two, three, and ten's a bundle;

A tally of burnt sticks
A heap of twigs,
With not one little bell-flower nodding up between them.

So then I take my blocks
And neatly place them
One balancing another.
I mock that ghastly clock and make a cupola of windows
And out of each I gaze awhile
Looking down long roads for you.
Then I put in a paved forecourt-yard,
And lay my smoothest squares,
And plant wide borders of campanulas.
But what I plant is nothing;
What comes up
Is fire-weed.
How often have I seen it

Glaring above the silver-grey of rotted boards
Where a deserted farmhouse
Was falling gently,
Each year a little more of it would settle.

Tush! This is fooling.
Words,
Words,
I think I hate them.
You cannot live in them,
And so they are no more to me
Than spiders' webs:
Tall, floating, ghostly webs,
Hanging above the candles of a church
When someone's to be buried.

Therefore I will put my words away,
And count the ticking of the clock
As men count pins in solitary cells.

To-morrow it may rain

And then, at least,

I shall not have to watch the terribly slow spanning

Of the sun

Across that reach of sky.

ALTERNATIVES

You mistake me, Madame, I ask for nothing.
I give arrogantly and with indifference.
These are no wall-fruits, soft and sugary, I offer you,
But dragon-berries,
Burnt black with their own fire,
Grown on brambles in the Courts of Destiny.
You may refuse them if you please,
Since choice is not denied you.
Then you will be lone as a rattling leaf
On an upland oak-tree,
Flinging its single shadow
Across a treeless snow.

THRENODY

On an evening of black snow
I walked along the causeway,
Wishing that I too might melt
Between the agitated fingers
Of a stuttering, intolerable sea.

TANKA

Roses and larkspur
And slender, serried lilies;
I wonder whether
These are worth your attention.
Consider it, and if not —

REFLECTION

Why does my clock persist in marking the hour after
that which it is?
Scornful clock!
Do you wish to remind me that there is never any
present,
Only a future and a long, long past?

PASTIME

"Whose pretty pawn is this,
And what shall be done to redeem it?"
CHILDREN'S GAME.

I AM immoderately fond of this place.
My thoughts run under it like the roots of trees and grasses,
They spread above it like fluttering, inconsequential leaves.
Spring comes to me with the blossoming of the snow-drop under the arbor-vitæ.
So all Springs come, and ever must do.
Spring ripens with the crocus cups on the South lawn,
Blue and white crocuses, remains of an ancient garden,
By the side of an ancient house —
So they told me, so I believed.
That shadowy structure holds a distant charm,
I see its walls printed upon the air, in certain moods,
And build it back into solidity with awed enjoyment.

But that is fairy-tale or history,
And I am more concerned with recollection.

How perpetually the seasons mark themselves!
Tulips for April,
Peonies for May.
The pillar-rose has not lacked its robin's-nest since
I remember,
Nor the pink horse-chestnut its mob of honey-bees:
The boom of them is essence of sleep and flowers,
Of Summer sleep and poetry mixed together.
Yet there are differences even in the repeated lilt of
time.
I seem to think the humming-birds are fewer,
And I have not seen a luna-moth for years.

Now, suddenly, here is a grosbeak
Perched in the double-cherry near the door.
He suggests that I look him over,

His striped black and white,
His rose-red triangle of waistcoat.
He is clearly on view for commendation,
Displaying himself as though I were his wife or his tailor
Observing to pronounce a verdict.
I had contemplated second childhood,
But scarcely believed it imminent,
And here I am plunged in it.
A rose-breasted grosbeak indeed,
And the last I saw was in that long, first childhood.
Senility may have its compensations,
I shall hunt up my old butterfly-net
And prowl about to-night seeking luna-moths.

AFTER AN ILLNESS

To a Cat from whom one has been separated for a long time

I have come back, Winky.
After a long time — yes.
There was a heavy sodden sea,
And I in the midst of it.
Before me, white snakes swam in a slime of seaweed.
They drew their bodies through the seaweed with a dreadful rustle
Like dead leaves on sand,
And left long open lanes behind them
Which glowed a clotted purple
Under the rays of a bursting, half-sunk sun.
Somewhere, on the right, were shores
With high glass cliffs.
The cliffs were hot and leapt up and down unceasingly,
And the heat from them blistered my body

Even under the water as I swam.

A wind rose

And drove the weeds faster upon me,

And I struggled in fear of the snakes who came swiftly

— swiftly —

Then I sank down somewhere out of the sea

Into a place of mist.

I was blind,

But my ears were shrunken points of awareness,

I was anguished by the keenness of my ears,

For all round were loud voices

Shouting harsh, unintelligible things

Which I strove to understand, but could not.

I trod upon the voices,

But they shifted like pebbles beneath my feet.

I fought with them,

Flinging them from me,

Pushing them down with my hands.

At last I had them under me and I was rising —

I saw nothing, but I was rising —
Then my mouth choked with salt,
And the salt entered my eyes and unsealed them.
Light was an explosion in my brain,
And I floated again in the seaweed sea
Under the bloody cliffs which leapt like flame.

Now I am sitting in a room again,
With fire-light fluttering on the walls
And you in my lap — purring.
Little cat, are you as glad to have me to lie upon
As I am to feel your fur under my hand?
Your purr sounds like the blowing of feathers in a wind;
It is a strangely comfortable sound,
And there is no other,
For the night smiles and says nothing.

"RODE THE SIX HUNDRED"

A JUNE-BUG has just flown in through my window,
And to-day I sat among narcissus and grape-hyacinths
Drinking the sudden sun.
The terrible Winter has passed
Flinging my garden full of flowers.
But for me I think it will not be long,
Not long,
Before it is the end.

Ah, my flowers!

THE SILENT HUSBAND

THE gifts of Heaven to you and me have not been
equal.
You play your table-lute even when it is stringless,
With the movement of your hands drawing forth the
five-coloured sounds which delight you.
Your Unworthy One is dull,
She hears only what is.
I beg you, therefore, my Lord,
Speak the words which I am fain to believe abide in
your heart.

THE "PLUM-BLOSSOM" CONCUBINE WRITES TO THE EMPEROR MING HUANG

I HAVE painted my eyebrows like willow-leaves to delight you.
I have painted them like cassia-leaves to attract your fancy.

Now the leaves of all the trees have fallen,
And snow hisses from the sky.

My Lord,
Could you look in this mirror,
You would see
My face, white as heaped snow,
My lips, red as a sunset
Between peaks of ice.

OLD EXAMINATION HALL

CHINA

THICKLY green is the moss on the corroded roof-tiles
of this hall,
Loud, loud, the cry of the wind striking and moving
the hinges of the old doors,
Silver as evening mist the spiders' webs spun about
the corners.

They broke their hearts here, bending over the pen-
brushes,
They tore their hearts upon the glittering words of
the T'ang poets,
They went mad, babbling Confucius and Mencius to
the cold clouds passing above an open window.

All this they did to wear a violet coat and a belt-clasp
of agate stones set in rubies.

Now through the windy hall sucks a cadence of falling
seas,
Seas withdrawn along an ancient shore,
Backward seas
Turned,
Running in great strides upon a bold and distant
continent.

PILLAR PRINTS

THE CUT SHADOW

Who sees the metal of the Temple mirrors
Across the blowing lustre of reflected trees?
So those who look into my heart
See only the faint, surging vision of your face.

LUSTRE

Your face to me is like the slope of a snow-mountain
In moonlight.
You, too, I cannot look at steadily.

ACCOLADE

"The garden was admirable," she said, nine hundred
years ago,
And in saying so, made it immortal.

GREEN SHADOWS

The moon on the very white sand of the garden

Is more pleasing to my eyes
Than the silver embroidered dress of the Lady Yasurahi,
Since she permits the Lieutenant-General of the Right Bodyguard
To row her in his boat.

DEBIT

Passing my nights with books,
The morning moon brings a sad greeting.

PAYMENT

After a night of labour
Better a misty sky than a white sunrise.

THE AUTUMN HEART

Faint and far the cry of the migrating geese,
Neither do they come near my house.

TO TWO UNKNOWN LADIES

LADIES, I do not know you, and I think
I do not want to. And a strange beginning
I make with that. Admitted; there's the odds.
You live between the covers of a book,
At least for me, but then I've known a crowd
Of other people who do that. My mind
Is stuffed with phantoms out of poets' brains.
But you are out of nothing but the air,
Or were, rather, for one of you is dead.
Dead or alive, it is the same to me,
Since all our contact lies in printer's ink.

But even this, peculiar as it is,
Is but a thread of singularity.
Here is another, that I see you double,
Each one beheld in profile, as it were.

And yet the full-face view is not composite,
But shows two totally specific halves
Which do not blend and still are not distinct.
And again why should I perplex my eyes
With trying so hard to draw you both together
As though you were a lighted candle, split
Upon an oculist's dissecting spectacles?

You see the thing is really not so simple
As A.B.C., or Keats, or "Christabel,"
And that is where the plague comes in for me.
For here, sitting quite calmly in my chair,
Settled down comfortably to an evening's reading,
I open up the queerest possibility,
Namely: the visitation of a ghost.
Suppose I throw you down the glove at once
And say I'm haunted, does that bring the answer?
If so, it blurs beyond what I can grasp
And foggy answers leave us where we were.

If either of you much attracted me
We could fall back upon phenomena
And make a pretty story out of psychic
Balances, but not to be too broad
In my discourtesy, nor prudish neither
(Since, really, I can hardly quite suppose
With all your ghostliness you follow me),
I feel no such attraction. Or if one
Bows to my sympathy for the briefest space,
Snap — it is gone! And, worst of all to tell,
What broke it is not in the least dislike
But utter boredom.

Now I acknowledge you are sensible,
And so I put it squarely; is there not
A strange absurdity in being haunted
By ghosts who crack one's jaws upon a yawn?
If that were all of it! But nothing's all.

For just as I am oozing into sleep,
See-sawing gently out of consciousness,
A phrase of yours will laugh out loud and clang
Me broad awake. And still there's more to come:
Sometimes I catch the faintest whiff of flutes.
And that I hold to be a paradox.

Did ever ladies lead so dull a life
As you? At least according to my taste
(I'll be polite enough to put it so).
You wrote, but, Great Saint Peter, tell me how!
With half a destiny. Now we, poor devils,
Fill our ink-wells with entrails, pour our veins
To wet a pencil point, and end at last
As shrivelled as a pod of money-wort,
And (let me say this in a neat aside)
We hope as shining. So do artists live,
And skulls are best when turned to flower-pots.

Now your way: Half a year, or more, or less;
A book tossed off between two sets of tennis,
Or jotted down some morning of hard frost
When the hounds could not run. Pale Jesus Christ,
Is this an effort worthy to be classed
Beyond the writing of cake recipes?
One of you painted. Well, you have no shame
To call such trash a picture. Years and years
You studied with the patient, stupid zeal
Of every amateur, and to this day
You never guess how badly you have done.

You speak of music, and my nerve-ends sting
Thinking of Chopin sentimentalized
By innocent young ladyhood; of Liszt
Doted upon, his tinsel rhodomontade
Held for high romance. And the ghastly nights
On cracked hotel pianos! It would be
Experience to read of washier stuff.

And yet — and yet — this clearly is not all.
Or why should I go back to you again,
Evening and evening, in a kind of thirst,
Surprising my tongue upon an almond taste.

A puzzling business. Everything comes back
And hooks upon a question. I suspect
Myself of cheating, stacking a full pack
With diamond Jacks extraordinary and Queens
Of Spades enough to make a declaration
Of quite superb inviolability.
But if the pack were dealt again, what then?
So what's the truth behind my set of it,
If I can keep my eyes clear long enough
To get a squint thereat? Almonds, I said,
Smooth, white, and bitter, wonderfully almonds.

Your fingers were unequal to the task
Of fashioning pictures, they were not enough.

For pictures take the whole and whip it round
To something out of you; and this you could
Contrive, but not as artists, since this thing
Was not your making. You were pigment, line.
I will not split you up to parts and parts,
Suffice it that the pictures here are you.
Double and single, like chrysanthemums,
Each of one family, but with just differences
Of colour and habit and the arch of stem.

Two halves, I said, and here I patterned rightly.
A frail half and a virile, but both shoots
Of one straight mother tree. It is your nobleness
That shocks a fire across these photographs
And makes them a contentment for strained eyes
Hurt by the ugliness of crowds in streets,
Stumbling short-sighted in a group of gargoyles.
You might have posed for caryatides,
With wind-drawn garments sucking round your limbs,

Your beauty blushing through their flattened gauze,
Before a temple, on a sunny day.

I wonder I am Greek enough to feel
Such solace in mere outline. But again,
As always where I find you are concerned,
This does not finish your effect. For when
I write down Greek, it is inadequate.
Marble you are, but there's that jet of fire
Like a red sunset on a fall of snow.
I feel a wind blowing off heather hills,
Am vaguely conscious of the moan of waves,
And seaweed fronds pulsating in a pool.
Now this, of course, is anything but Greek.

Horses and dogs! You say yourself that they
Are stuck with limpet-closeness to your life.
And there, I think, is more than parallel.
For dogs and horses have a wistfulness,

A pathos, in their bursts of gaiety
Which tears the heart, even when crinky-tail
Sets dogs in bundles racing round a lawn,
Or snaps a horse's feet to jigging springs
Cat-dancing with a sudden twitch of ears.
And you are both like that, for your jokes bob
Under taut flags across a bay of tears.

That figure is so old, I feel a twinge
Of hot compunction at using it again.
But even artists stub their toes sometimes
Upon the fallen centuries, and Helen
Was much considered by the youth of Troy.
I think perhaps your prototypes in Sparta
Called forth that metaphor. But let it pass.
It is a fact that my eyes itch and burn
At this of you on horseback. Foolish! Oh,
Shall you call it folly at this time of day,
You, who tell tales of banshees in a park!

Again a facet. Like a lapidary
I cut and cut in microscopic flakes,
But never get the gem for all these sides.
There's more to you than single flesh and blood
Though these be fine and clear as new-stripped
almonds.
And more than tears; but what it is drifts out
Beyond the surf-line of my consciousness
And blurs in dazzle so I lose its edge.
The puzzle grows as I unravel it,
For all these feelings come out of a book
And you, who cannot write, have written it.

There's food for many solitary munchings,
And sticks to beat an artist's soul withal.
You cannot write, and look what you have written:
Two lives which stare and twinkle on the page
So that I blind in looking. That's a glare

To put out farthing candles of professionals.
Had I not seen your drawings, I might almost
Have been bewitched by that hotel piano
And guessed you better understood your Chopin.
Now I am all at sea again and clinging
To horses and a cat-leap at a fence.

Well, there it stands, and what I get is life,
And love held back and breaking up and out.
Your heart is never on your sleeve, you say;
But try your hardest, it is in your pen,
And death is nothing to vitality
Swinging across a second heart. At best
One sees a breeding like those draperies
Which cool my naked caryatides.
Why, I'm not dead, but merely gone in space
And that you slap away with easy hand
Drawing me closer much than you intend.

Perhaps the very queerest of these facts
Is that I feel apologies are due
For just this thing which wakes my admiration.
You do not want me crowding in behind
That carefully embroidered sleeve, and yet
What I behold mounts to a blazing altar,
And both are there before it, worshipping.
Will you forgive this little pinch of incense,
For one of you is dead and she will know,
Perhaps, at least, what magic brought me here.
And I will never seek to meet the other,
I only write to exorcise a ghost.

WRITTEN ON THE REVERSE

He told me, one night, when we were off duty,
And with a pride which might have been Lord Nelson's
Detailing Emma to a fellow Admiral —
Only that's one thing Nelson never did —
And Lady Hamilton was gold and rubies
While this girl was a circus-rider's spangles,
As real as they, at least not one whit more so,
And he, poor boy, as far from Nelson's honour.
Well, there you have it, tucked up in our tent,
Propping our spurs against an iron stove-pipe
And talking as I'm wishing now we hadn't.
But he was at it, and I couldn't stop him.
I swear the fellow's talk became quite lyric,
A sort of chucking stars, and into sawdust —
It seemed to me the lady was no better;
She scuffled underneath a press of footsteps,

His among others. I had liked him hugely.
A great, big, honest, rather clumsy chap,
Just off of middle-age, and such a baby,
Playing the soldier in a uniform,
And playing it damned well, you understand;
We had no better in the regiment.
I used to chuckle just to see him acting
His own ideal. But somehow as I listened
The folly in him rasped upon my nerves.
What right had he to be so innocent
To whip a tawdry intrigue up to poetry
And set me shivering who had not got it.
He painted her exactly. I could see
Not only what he said, but what he didn't.
I guessed the sort of scented talcum-powder
Kind of a woman who had picked him up.
Cheap smartness, one who pats her hair in order
Before shop-windows, and pays for what she buys
With crumpled bills fished from a small mesh purse

Whose gold is gilding and wearing off at that;
Add, too, a passion for gold-tipped cigarettes
And blue-sashed bon-bon boxes. But she was shrewd,
I knew as much because he was so pleased —
With her, of course, and also with himself.
He saw her Cleopatra on high Nile
Floating between blue lupins, graciously
According to him, Anthony, her heart.
And that was just the way he wasn't Nelson,
Who saw her Emma — and nothing else at all.
The thing stopped there, it seemed, for he was married
And decent enough before she came, I know.
He filled the ache in him with high-falutin,
I wondered how long that would satisfy
And felt his charmer would draw him farther in
To cheques of somewhat high denomination
Paid, naturally, upon receipt of value.
Well, when he took to glowing like the sun

Upon a hayrick on a Summer morning
I thought the lady had achieved her figure.
But what I didn't reckon was just the man.
The thing was epic to him now, I saw.
War and his love — a fearful combination
To snarl the simple structure of his life.
He twisted to it and turned upon himself
With such a marvellous gyration, that in some way
He pulled it up to grandeur, and he a-top
Mystically bright and crowned with bitter laurel.
And all the time, behind, there was his wife.
He got her so at last, fuddled his wits
To it, that she became the smirch upon
His unique glory. I used to marvel at the paradox
He'd hung cocooning round him, but so it was.
The fellow grew to something greatly larger
Than I could have believed. I never said
This was a moral tale, you understand,
It's simply true.

Well, we went over, both
In the same company, I Captain to his Lieutenant.
And, in due course, were sent on to the front.
A month went by, and then a bit of shell
Took him between the shoulder-blades and gouged
Into a lung and stayed there. We were caught,
A handful of us, right between barrages.
I'd got a leg, or rather hadn't one,
So there we sat, and cursed, and bled, and died.
I didn't, you observe. Worse luck, perhaps.
I'll never get the joy that fellow had
Coughing, and spitting, and whimpering her name.
He met that shell toting a wounded sergeant
Through our barrage, and, coming back, it hit.
Tough luck? Oh, I don't know. He had his time.
When the delirium struck him, I covered my ears,
Hearing a man like that is too close cornered,
Like something naked hurting you with beauty.
It ended then for him, but I came home.

His wife was cool and stately as a widow.
The talcum-powder lady changed her man.
And yet I think the person was an artist
To carve a hero out of what he was
When she first ran across him. I wonder sometimes
What she can think about it. As for me,
I always give it up at just this point.
Poor dear old chap, God bless his silly soul.

SILHOUETTE WITH SEPIA BACKGROUND

He moved in, with two thousand books, and a bed,
and an armchair,
Into a little room under the roof of the great building
with the pointed, carved stone doorway.
At eleven o'clock precisely, he would come out of the
pointed stone doorway
And cross the street to the Common to feed the squir-
rels,
Then he would wander on to the Public Garden to
gaze at the geometrical flower-beds.
He did this every day, and the orange-vendor at the
corner told the time by him; it saved crossing
Tremont Street to look up at the clock on
Park Street Church.

One morning he did not come, and the traffic policeman missed him,

So did the park policeman, and they talked about it together when they should have been minding their business.

On the second day, they spoke to the orange-vendor, but he knew nothing;

It would have been wiser to ask the pigeons who fly everywhere, but they never thought of that.

On the third day, they consulted the janitor, and, come to think of it, the janitor had not seen him either.

Then the janitor and the park policeman (for the traffic policeman dared not leave his post)

Went upstairs together ever so high, a flight higher than the elevator ran.

They had to break in the door, but that was no great thing,

It was an old door, and rickety.

They found him sitting quietly in his chair, with the book he had been reading fallen on the floor beside him.

He had been dead three days, but only the pigeons knew that.

AQUATINT FRAMED IN GOLD

Six flights up in an out-of-date apartment house
Where all the door-jambs and wainscots are of black walnut
And the last tenant died at the ripe age of eighty.
Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,
Crowded into a corner against the black walnut wainscot.

Surrounded by the household gods of her family for three generations:
Teak-wood cabinets, rice-paper picture books, slim, comfortless chairs of spotted bamboo.
Too many house gods for the space allotted them, exuding an old and corroding beauty, a beauty faded and smelling of the past.
Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,

Accurately telling the time, but forgetting whether
it is to-day or yesterday.

Sleeping every night in a walnut bedstead
With a headboard like the end of a family pew;
Waking every morning to the photographs of dead
relations,
Dead relations sifted all over the house,
Accumulated in drifts like dust or snow.
Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,
Indifferently keeping up an old tradition,
Unconcernedly registering the anniversaries of ill-
nesses and deaths,
But omitting the births, they were so long ago.

The lady is neither young nor old,
She walks like a wax-work among her crumbling
possessions.
She is automatic and ageless like the clock,

And she, too, is of a bygone pattern.
She sits at her frugal dinner,
Careful of its ancient etiquette,
Opposite the portrait of a great-aunt
Done by a forgotten painter.
The portrait lived once, it would seem,
To judge by the coquetry of its attire;
But the lady has always been a wax-work,
Of no age in particular,
But of an unquestioned ancestry.
Tick-tock, the grandfather's clock,
Ironically recording an hour of no importance.

MINIATURE

Because the little gentleman made nautical instruments
And lived in a street which ran down to the sea,
The neighbours called him "Salt Charlie."
I wonder what they would have said if they had known
That he stole out every evening to a sweet-shop
And bought sticks of red-and-white sugar candy.
It was a pleasant thing to see him,
Standing meekly before the custom-house,
Sucking a sugar-stick,
And gazing at the dead funnels of anchored steamers
Against a star-sprung sky.

I thought of him in an oval gilt frame
Against sprigged wall-paper,

Done in Fra Angelico pinks and blues

Of a clear and sprightly elegance.

Wherefore, being convinced of his value as ornament,

I have set him on paper for the delectation

Of sundry scattered persons

Who consider such things important.

EASEL PICTURE

Decoration Day

She is a washerwoman most of the time,
But to-day she is a widow.
Important distinction, which warrants a plaintive manner
And her best black bombazine.
To be sure, she is only a plain widow,
And her husband was a drunkard who ill-treated her,
But she never forgets that it is owing to him that she ranks third in the cemetery,
Next to the war-widows and gold-starred mothers.
She regrets that he did not enlist
Instead of lying about his age and dying coldly of pneumonia,
Until she reflects that he might have returned from overseas and beaten her according to custom.

The thought purges her of envy, and she sprinkles
woe-begone, contented tears
On the bell-glass of artificial flowers she lays on his
grave;
It is a beautiful offering and has been much admired.
With a blissful sense of bereavement, she bows her
head over the bell-glass,
Then rises to totter to the gate on the arm of a friend
who has offered to give her a lift home.
In her attic room, she carefully folds the bombazine,
Whispering to herself: "It was a beautiful Decoration
Day."

THE IRONY OF DEATH

A Funeral

You were always so vigorous,
And your mind was as full of movement as your body.
When you sprang over rocks and boulders,
Or pushed waist-high through the fern,
I used to envy your strength,
And your buoyant lightness.
You were a true pagan
And Nature was your God.
You had no use for other gods,
And said so.
The day before you died you said so,
And you died bravely as you had lived,
With the farewell of a staunch comrade upon your lips.

I went to the funeral which they gave you.

No other of your real friends was there,
This was not the manner in which they were used to
meet you.
The room was crowded with your husband's colleagues
and their wives,
And people who had come for the sake of appearances.
We were shut in the stifling room,
With the scent of the flowers on your coffin.
A clergyman read the funeral service
Which you despised,
And the flowers wilted in the hot air.
Then I knew that you were dead
And I was glad,
For you would have wept to see how your foolish
husband exposed his soul
In his endeavour to give you a proper funeral.

THE GRAVE

I LEFT the horse outside,
For there were no roads in the little graveyard,
No paths,
Only a disorder of gravestones,
And moss, and ragged grass,
And broken twigs fallen from the trees overhead.
The ground was hummocked and hollowed
Between the gravestones,
And I stumbled among them
Reading the inscriptions
To guide me.
Your monument was to be designed by a great architect
They had told me,
But not yet, although you had been dead four months.
Such things require consideration.

So I went from stone to stone,
Seeking the child's grave
Near which they had laid you.
Suddenly I tripped,
And jerking forward to save myself
On the uneven ground,
I saw in front of me two fruit jars
Leaning crookedly against each other,
And half-full of water foul to the colour of tobacco
juice.
They were smeared with the splashings of rain,
And the rims of the covers were red with rust;
In one a leaf was still clinging to a dying stalk,
In the other the stalk was quite dead.
Above them a tablet to a dead child
Was let into a rock.

THE MIRROR

Opaque because of the run mercury at its back,
White with a breath of yellow, like tarnished silver,
The old mirror hangs over the chimney-piece
Incased in its carved frame, and reflects the room beneath.
It is warped and bulging, because of the great fires
Of other years; and dim with the sun shining in it every Spring.
Old men and children move before it, and it reflects them all,
Pulling them this way and that in its uneven surface.
The pictures pass over it like mist over a morning window,
And it hangs in its carved frame, tarnished and beautiful,
And reflects everything.

PORTRAIT OF AN ORCHESTRA LEADER

A YOUNG man on a platform?

A white flame upreared in a silver dish,

Swaying to the wind of horns and oboes,

Bending to the undulate waves of violins.

Do you think you see a young man in a swallow-tailed coat leading an orchestra?

I tell you it is a white, pointed flame in a silver dish.

PORTRAIT

(E. R. B.)

THIS lady is like a grass-blade sheathed in ice,
Like hoar-frost running along the borders of a formal garden.
She is like violets under the misted glass of a cold frame
On an Autumn morning with the sun scarcely above the trees.

The air has a smart twinge to it, I think,
And the asters are black and broken;
But what can equal the glitter of the frosty grass-blades,
Held to a rigid radiance,
Bent and motionless,
Answering nothing to the wind?

No, do not lift the frames.
The violets are a lovely touch of colour,
And I would rather forego the scent of them
Than run the risk of their freezing.

MAGNOLIA GARDENS

CHARLESTON, S.C.

It was a disappointment,
For I do not like magenta,
And the garden was a fire of magenta
Exploding like a bomb into the light-coloured peace
of a Spring afternoon.
Not wistaria dropping through Spanish moss,
Not cherokees sprinkling the tops of trees with moon-
shaped stars,
Not the little pricked-out blooms of banksia roses,
Could quench the flare of raw magenta.
Rubens women shaking the fatness of their bodies
In an opulent egotism
Till the curves and colours of flesh
Are nauseous to the sight,
So this magenta.

Hateful,

Reeking with sensuality,

Bestial, obscene —

I remember you as something to be forgotten.

But I cherish the smooth sweep of the colourless river,

And the thin, clear song of the red-winged blackbirds

In the marsh-grasses on the opposite bank.

A SOUTH CAROLINA FOREST

Hush, hush, these woods are thick with shapes and voices,
They crowd behind, in front,
Scarcely can one's wheels break through them.
For God's sake, drive quickly!
There are butchered victims behind those trees,
And what you say is moss I know is the dead hair of hanged men.
Drive faster, faster.
The hair will catch in our wheels and clog them;
We are thrown from side to side by the dead bodies in the road,
Do you not smell the reek of them,
And see the jaundiced film that hides the stars?
Stand on the accelerator. I would rather be bumped to a jelly

Than caught by clutching hands I cannot see,
Than be stifled by the press of mouths I cannot feel.
Not in the light glare, you fool, but on either side of it.
Curse these swift, running trees,
Hurl them aside, leap them, crush them down,
Say prayers if you like,
Do anything to drown the screaming silence of this
forest,
To hide the spinning shapes that jam the trees.
What mystic adventure is this
In which you have engulfed me?
What no-world have you shot us into?
What Dante dream without a farther edge?
Fright kills, they say, and I believe it.
If you would not have murder on your conscience,
For Heaven's sake, get on!

CIRCUS TENTS BY LAKE MICHIGAN

I LOOKED from my window at the great lake,
And Shakespeare, and Keats, and Whitman stood beside my chair
And pointed out to me things I might not have seen.
They bade me observe the feather lights lying upon the lake surface,
The blue enlarging upon a greater blue of the flat, approaching water,
The crispness of its line against the shore.
But the trains ran beneath my window, puffing and grinding,
And from the circus tents beyond the railroad tracks
Came the incessant, teasing bleat of the heard notes of a brass band.
"Mr. Shakespeare," I urged, "be so kind as to repeat what you just said,

I did not quite hear it.

And, Mr. Keats, say that once again, if you please, I wish to lose nothing."

Only Walt Whitman kept on speaking,

Rolling out words which swept through the noise like a heavy moon through clouds,

And his stretched arm pointed to the lake, cutting the tent in two, blotting out the middle flag.

So it went on all day,

And the poets withdrew, baffled,

And the circus tent swelled to a prodigious size and hung before me as all America.

And the sorrow of jungle animals wasting themselves upon sawdust entered my heart,

And the glory and grief of the trapeze artists and their useless perfection

Rasped my nerves with the prick of hail.

So it was all day,

And all day I watched and saw my country swallowed
up by the huge tent,
Far from trees, sweltering in a hot dust,
Crying its delight cheaply and violently through the
voices of peanut-men and clowns.

Night came, and the band droned on and bright lights
glared in the tents.
I had ceased to think. I stared out of the window and
beat time to the band on the arm of my chair.
Beyond the tent, the great lake crouched in darkness,
waiting.
I thought it waited to say a word to the caged, jungle
animals,
To the trapeze artists who had cheated death another
day.
I too waited until the tent lights went out,
And the lighthouses shone, red and white, in even pul-
sations,

Half-way up my black window.
And Shakespeare, and Keats, and Whitman came back
and watched the turning lights with me,
Silently we watched them half-way up the window.
Then an elephant trumpeted, dreaming of water and
lush trees,
And a jackal, forgetting his cage, howled to the smell
of the creeping water,
And I wrote a poem for the trapeze artists which they
will never read,
And showed it to my companions, who only nodded,
For they were watching the turning lighthouse lan-
terns, revolving red and white — red and white
— slowly, evenly, half-way up the window.

ST. LOUIS

JUNE

FLAT,

Flat,

Long as sight

Either way.

An immense country,

With a great river

Steaming it full of moist, unbearable heat.

The orchards are little quincunxes of Noah's Ark trees,

The plows and horses are children's toys tracing amusingly shallow lines upon an illimitable surface.

Great chunks of life to match the country,

Great lungs to breathe this hot, wet air.

But it is not mine.

Mine is a land of hills

Lying couchant in the angles of heraldic beasts

About white villages.
A land of singing elms and pine-trees.
A restless up and down land
Always mounting, dipping, slipping into a different contour,
Where the roads turn every hundred yards or so,
Where brooks rattle forgotten Indian names to tired farm-houses,
And faint spires of old meeting-houses
Flaunt their golden weather-cocks in a brave show of challenge at a sunset sky.

Here the heat stuffs down with the thickness of boiled feathers,
The river runs in steam.
There, lilacs are in bloom,
Cool blue-purples, wine-reds, whites,
Flying colour to quiet dooryards.
Grown year on year to a suddenness of old perfection,

Saying "Before! Before!" to each new Spring.

Here is "Now,"

But "Before" is mine with the lilacs,

With the white sea of everywhither,

With the heraldic, story-telling hills.

THE REVENGE

ALL night I read a little book,
A very little book it was.
It had a pretty, shimmering look
Like silver threaded into gauze.

I read it till the windows turned
Into blue ghosts which stared at me.
The fire tittered as it burned.
A dwarfish sneer perched on my knee.

Who was it put the poison there?
Who has conceived this hellish thing —
To lay a sightless, soundless snare
Amid its lovely whispering?

So gently came the rush of rhymes,

So lightly breathed the poison in —
Who thinks of cinquecento crimes,
White hellebore on jessamine?

I took that little shy, sleek book
And set a crimson match to it.
It crinkled like a freshet brook,
And flaked and vanished, bit by bit.

There was no book my hands could hold,
No book my eyes could ever see,
But round my head it ran, a bold
Ironical phylactery.

I cannot read the book again,
But there's no need, it scalds my head,
A strip of livid, living pain
I shall not lose till I am dead.

For hate is old as eagle peaks,
And hate is new as sunrise gulls,
And hate is ravening vulture beaks
Descending on a place of skulls.

Hate is a torch, hate is a spur,
Hate will accomplish my design:
The author's first biographer!
I pray, O Hate, that task be mine.

I shall not need to criticize
Nor look the subject up at all,
But simply turn round both my eyes
And gaze at my brain's inner wall.

There I shall see a fresco wreath
Of letters moulded of dried tears,
And annotated underneath
The things I've thought and thought for years.

'Twill be a pleasant job, I think,
To crumble up those dusty tears,
And stir them thickly in my ink;
Hate paid at last his long arrears.

My foot-notes will enrich the brew
With colours I've brought back from Hell.
I'll write down all I ever knew.
By Satan's ears, I'll write it well!

By Satan's tongue! I'll tell the truth,
And not one word will add to it,
From his egregious, twisted youth
To his last frozen torture fit.

I'll write down his biography
So that the world will die of laughter.
I'll pin him like a squirming fly,

A comic spasm of hereafter.

I'll make his sins a jig of mirth,
His loves so many masterpieces
Of high derision. I will dig
Bare the cold roots of his caprices.

I'll sling about him every soul
He squeezed and drained to give him drink.
His wife gone mad — I'll make it droll.
Bless the Hell colours in my ink!

I'll leave him not a decent rag
Of tragedy to wrap about him.
I'll hang him up as a red flag
Till every street boy learns to shout him.

I've taken up a pretty whim,
But, tit for tat, he had his chance.

And I may end by blessing him,
My partner in this ghoulish dance.

He slew me for a time, admitted;
But I shall slay him for all time.
Poor shrivelled clown whom I've outwitted,
I pardon you your poisoned rhyme.

Go peacefully, for I have done
With you and your false book is dead.
There's sorrow, too, in having won.
Go softly then, and go well sped.

CHILL

I THOUGHT of myself as a walnut
Hung above fallen leaves,
Desperately clinging and jerking
At the edge of a hollow wind.

I counted the leaves below me,
Scuffling and grating together.
I feared lest my withered stem
Should drop me too soon upon them.

The hollow wind played music,
Running over the branches.
The sapless chords of the branches
Whined a shrunken, glimmering tune.

The moon with a hump-backed shoulder

Shook a cloud off as though it were water,
And her light dripped down like water
Over the crackling leaves.

And shadows rose from the tree-trunks,
Cocking their legs and their ankles,
Dancing a dance of snapped elbows,
Distorting the beds of the leaves.

The owls flew shrieking above them,
Field-mice, their long tails twisted,
Ran like an army of ants
Gnawing and nudging each other.

And the wind played cymbals and tubas
To the beat of a tarantella,
Rocking in broken circles,
Chaining the tops of the tree.

And I was the kettle-drum tapping,
Tap-tapping my shell on the branch,
Terribly pulled and contorted,
Fearing the dance of the shadows.

Then there came to me the vision of a hepatica
Standing thinly out of a mould of Winter leaves,
Star-white, calling Good-morning to a soft sky.
Gently swayed the white hepatica,
Drinking the wet mould.
I felt the roots streaming through it,
I felt the moisture rising into the white petals.
I saw the sun reach down and answer the bright
hepatica.

I loosened my stem and fell — fell —
Into blackness,
For the cloud had re-captured the moon.

SNOW

It snowed yesterday,
And to-day I have been choked with the pale falling
of snow.
It drops steadily,
Slowly,
Sliding in slant lines of white
Against green trees.
The trees burn through it
Like slabs of green water
Beneath the foam of a waterfall.
The trees are permanent and still,
The snow is permanent also,
Light as dust,
Grim as the heave of massed water,
Continuous as the beat of death.
A snow-flake on a path,
A foot treads upon it and it is gone.

Millions by millions of snow-flakes,

And a hundred thousand people

Struggle under a smooth, smothering desolation.

In a bitter white twilight

The snow creeps upon the city,

Coming gently,

Little crystals of no account

Dropping down between solid houses.

The warm streets melt it,

But soon their power fails,

The roadways disappear,

The sidewalks sink and fade,

From doorway to opposite doorway

Lies a prairie of sudden snow.

My rhododendron bushes

Are single leaves gasping for air.

My windows are dull eyes

Gazing at a crushed heaven.

The wind flings rattles of sneering laughter

Down the chimneys.

Once there was a sun;

I saw it weeks ago

Commanding a blue sky,

Driving the hours before it in a coloured, satisfactory

procession.

Now there is no sky,

Merely a descending of grey particles,

Ordered, open,

A sequence of irony

Deftly possessing itself of the world.

Long ago,

On nights like this,

Wolves howled among these trees;

Now there is silence,

And the sibilant sifting murmur of the snow.

But I expect to hear the wolves,

I expect the house-roof to crumble

And leave me pushing against white drifts,

Chattering nonsense with a parched tongue,

Gone mad with whiteness,

Drowned under the feathers of the snow.

There used to be sleigh-bells,

Little shaken sprays of music,

To make the snow human.

Strong, friendly horses

Trampling the storm with living sinews.

Now —

It slips,

Slips,

Cool,

Still,

Fragile and irrefragable,

And I see it falling on a dead continent

Where there is no more life,

No more desire,

Only the windless cold of an old planet

Voyaging a perpetuity of stars.

OLD SNOW

THE earth is iron,
The winds are bands of steel,
The snow is a pock-marked beggar-woman
Crouching at a street corner
Whining an old misery over and over.
They say she was white once, and a virgin.
But who remembers it —
Seeing her lie indecently huddled upon an iron earth,
Cringing under the strokes of the steel-band wind?

NEW HEAVENS FOR OLD

I AM useless.
What I do is nothing,
What I think has no savour.
There is an almanac between the windows:
It is of the year when I was born.

My fellows call to me to join them,
They shout for me,
Passing the house in a great wind of vermilion banners.
They are fresh and fulminant,
They are indecent and strut with the thought of it,
They laugh, and curse, and brawl,
And cheer a holocaust of "Who comes firsts!" at the iron fronts of the houses at the two edges of the street.

Young men with naked hearts jeering between iron
house-fronts,
Young men with naked bodies beneath their clothes
Passionately conscious of them,
Ready to strip off their clothes,
Ready to strip off their customs, their usual routine,
Clamouring for the rawness of life,
In love with appetite,
Proclaiming it as a creed,
Worshipping youth,
Worshipping themselves.
They call for women and the women come,
They bare the whiteness of their lusts to the dead
gaze of the old house-fronts,
They roar down the street like flame,
They explode upon the dead houses like new, sharp
fire.

But I —

I arrange three roses in a Chinese vase:

A pink one,

A red one,

A yellow one.

I fuss over their arrangement.

Then I sit in a South window

And sip pale wine with a touch of hemlock in it,

And think of Winter nights,

And field-mice crossing and re-crossing

The spot which will be my grave.

THE SIBYL

SHE was an aggressively unattractive old woman,
Sitting there behind the table in the hotel corridor.
Nothing could make her interesting or pathetic,
Although to be on duty at midnight
Proved her lot unfortunate.
From her topknot of grey, escaping, withered hair
To her fat, delaying hands,
She precluded pathos;
Even her melancholy attempt at finery,
A faded imitation coral necklace,
Seemed only dirty and dull.
Hers was a hard lot indeed,
Yet I could not pity her.
I asked for a pencil.
She gave me one, and grudged the doing it heartily.
When I reached my room, I found that the pencil had
a rubber on the end.

Cursed old sibyl!

What do you mean by uttering prophecies

At midnight,

In a hotel corridor!

THE MADMAN

My house burnt down, I saw the stars
Where a dull ceiling once had been.
The smoky rafters stood like bars
With glittering planets in between.

My neighbours came and saved the shell
Of my burnt house. I took no heed.
They called to me that all was well.
I strid a rafter like a steed.

My neighbours stamped the flower beds,
Imploring me to clamber down.
And all the time above their heads
The steady stars were like a crown.

I chirruped to my rafter horse

That he might flee across the sky,
Galloping in a planet's course
As I directed. Who was I?

I heard the shouts shot up at me,
I heard the cry: "The man's a fool!"
The rafter leapt amazingly
Among the stars. The air was cool.

The stars ran swiftly past my ear.
Chirping and chuckling, so they came.
They whispered to me not to fear.
I did not fear, the stars were tame.

They fawned and licked my hands and feet,
I rode enwound in fondling stars.
They grouped themselves to make a street,
And Venus flew with me, and Mars.

Jupiter strode along ahead
To push the crowding stars aside,
And Mercury, with fluttering tread,
Held back the rear that I might ride.

Now who would own a house of wood,
Of clay, or even morticed stone?
A hundred years I might have stood
Under the ceilings hanging prone.

"Blest fire!" I thought, and dug my heels
Into the rafter. On it slid.
The stars were road-dust blown from wheels
Behind my flight. I reached the lid.

There was the cover of the sky.
I cried out to my rafter, "Stop!"
It heeded not at all, and I
Came bump against the awful top.

The shock deprived me of my breath
And shuttlecocking down I went.
A palsied thought that this was death
Scattered my senses and I bent.

All huddled up upon my steed
I clung, but with a swoop the rafter
Dropped through my legs which could not speed
So fast. I fell alone thereafter.

I fell and fell again. I fell
For years and years. It was so dark
I only knew the door of Hell
Because it glowed with a red spark.

The stars had gone, the years had gone,
A memory was all I had.
I sat in a burnt dusk alone

And heard a voice say, "He is mad!"

Perhaps, thought I, it may be so,
But it's a poor man who'll not pay
For pleasures had when pleasures go.
Thank Fortune, I'm not made that way.

They brought a wife and child to me
And called them mine. The silly dolts!
I turned my back upon their plea.
They put me behind bars and bolts.

I did not care a tinker's damn
For this or that. For I am he
Who rode with stars, that's what I am,
And will be to Eternity.

I've sold my life for one short night
And it was worth the payment due.

A man has certainly a right
To do as he desires to do.

They tell me 'twas my wife and child
Who owned my life. But these are names
I've never heard before. Who build
Such flimsy lies can make no claims.

Fiddlesticks! fellows. Leave me be;
Here or elsewhere, it matters not.
Blinded by stars, I cannot see.
A memory is all I've got.

Leave me alone to dree my weird.
It always comes, the paying day.
And I remember I once steered
A râfter through a milky way.

DIRGE

I LEFT her there in the rushes by the river,
Where the aspen leaves make a quiver — quiver —
quiver —
And the breeze through the trees casts a silver shiver,
I left her floating there.
She swore to die and I left her dead
For what I answered to what she said.
Was there anything I could have done instead?
Oh, the bitter, bitter beauty of her hair!

For days I had heard the call of the town.
But there was no need for her to drown.
Oh, the bubbles that came up as she went down,
And the creak of the displaced reeds!
Snakes of hair-strands mounting through the green,
Nosing past the reed-stems, catching in between,
And a pallid shadow like a sunken tambourine.

Was it she I saw in the weeds?

My boat drew out and drifted away,
What was the need for me to stay?
A drowned body is but water-logged clay.
I must pull for the night comes on.
But the water spurns the oars off as though it were ice,
The boat is held as if wedged in a vice.
A gull cries once, a gull cries twice,
And a fog conceals the sun.

Red water-snakes with glimmering eyes
And bells on their tails, I see them rise
Here, there, everywhere. A swart crow flies
Croaking toward the shore.
And fastened to the snakes are pale strange things
With waving, weaving tentacles like arms, and rings
Clinging tight and tidily to misty pencillings.
I have seen those rings before.

Not one face, alone, nor two, nor three,
But faces as many as the shells in the sea,
Their lank jaws trailing beside them crookedly.
The river sighs and moans.
The tossing snakes are the hideous hair
Sprung from these heads. And the white eyes glare
At my boat stuck still in a musty air
Jolted by the clatter of bones.

It's a lie! A lie! She wished to die,
Could any one have stopped her? There was no time
to try.
But the whimpering air seems to jellify.
My heart-beats slow and fail.
The bells on the snakes shrill an angelus.
The oily sky drips its yellow pus
Through the twilight — and I? You see me thus.
A murderer locked in jail.

But all of every night and all of every day
I see her body with the rushes sway,
And the needles of the sun in the disarray
  Of her glorious, undulant hair.
Her face smiles at me through the cool, calm green
Of the water pool like a Florentine
Image set in lilies, but the lilies intervene.
  I cannot reach her there.

Farewell, loveliest, azure-lidded, parted
By your misunderstanding and my wrath. Ah, eager-
    hearted,
Prone to take offence at jests scarcely even started,
  There you lie with hope.
Both lost together at a single turn.
Water soaks your eyes and brain, mine only burn.
Jailer put the clock on, upset the urn,
  Be pitiful and hurry with the rope.

ANECDOTE

FIRST SOLILOQUY

Her breasts were small, upright, virginal;
Even through her clothes I could feel the nipples
pointing upward when I touched her inadvertently.
The chastity of her garments was pronounced,
But no disposal of material could keep the shape of her
breasts unseen.

And you would walk as a Spring wind,
You would order your demeanour as though there were
still frost in the air,
You would keep me to my distance by the cool agreeableness of your speech.
You are foolish, Madam, or deceived.
Is it possible you underrate my sensibility

And do not realize that I hold your breasts
In the hollow of my hand?

SECOND SOLILOQUY

His voice was a dagger tipped with honey,
His touch a scimitar dripping myrrh and gall.
He parted me from myself
And I stood alone in sunshine and trembled.
I caught my garments about me,
But they withered one by one as leaves wither, and
fell.
I was alone in the wide sunlight;
His eyes were winds which would not leave me.
I would have sought a tree,
But the place where I was was bare and light.
Merciless light he shed upon me,
And I stretched my arms in shame and rejoicing.

Why do you stand there watching me?
Are you blind to what is really happening
That you talk so lightly of trifles?
Stop talking, you suffocate me.
Does any one notice?
Why do you strip me before all these people —
You, who care nothing for my nakedness?
Unbearable the anguish of my body,
The ache of my breasts,
The strain of covering myself is choking me.
Why do you do nothing but talk?
Have you no hands, no heart,
Or are you so cynical that you expose me for a whim?
Oh, I am well-trained, be sure of that,
But can you not see through my pretense?
It is agony to hold myself away from you,
Yet you are as impassive as a stone Hermes before
whom Venus herself would need no cloak.
Now that you are gone, what have you left me?

No privacy at all, I think.

You have stolen my secrecy, and flung it back as something not worth taking.

I have only the harsh memory of your eyes,

Your dull, stone eyes which haunt me in the dark.

EPITHALAMIUM IN THE MODERN MANNER

THE round, red moon ran a level eye along the hay-
field,
Appraising conditions with a view to possibilities.
It was the moon's business to see that the shadows of
the cocks were of sufficient size,
As a preliminary to the seasonable arrival of the next
generation.

"To one enamoured of dragonflies,
What is a chip hat with a ribbon round it?
To one engrossed in a game of cribbage,
What is the importance of the Treaty of Ghent?"
Which shows that Archibald was in a naughty humour,
And Joanna more than usually occupied with the
counting of grass-blades.

The moon caught them in her long orange arms
And jostled them together with so thorough a completeness
That they fell, giggling, into a haycock shadow,
As perfect a pair of young animals as need be
For the maintenance of the species man on an ant-corroded planet.

POINTS OF VIEW

YOUTH cocks his hat and rides up the street.
Age cocks his eye only to see it.

Youth puts his horse at a five-barred gate.
Age chuckles grimly and sits down to wait.

Youth limps by with a broken-kneed horse.
Age, through the shutters, mutters "Of course!"

Youth curses Fate for his splitting head.
Age lights the candle and hobbles to bed.

SHOOTING THE SUN

Four horizons cozen me
To distances I dimly see.
Four paths beckon me to stray,
Each a bold and separate way.
Monday morning shows the East
Satisfying as a feast.
Tuesday I will none of it,
West alone holds benefit.
Later in the week 'tis due
North that I would hurry to.
While on other days I find
To the South content of mind.
So I start, but never rest
North or South or East or West.
Each horizon has its claim
Solace to a different aim.

Four-soul'd like the wind am I,

Voyaging an endless sky,

Undergoing destiny.

THE CUSTOMER

SHE came into my shop to-day,
The old maid from across the way,
With her pursed-up lips and disdainful mien
And her walk, each step with another between.

Her mouth drew up above her nose,
No wrinkles ever so sniffed as those.
Her dress was too long, too short, too square,
Each inch measured out with what should be there.

Her hair, a twisted wad of grey,
Tipped her hat in the strangest way
So that every angle hurt like a noise,
There was discord in its very poise.

Her eyeglass crystals made her eyes
Puff out to a prodigious size:

The opaque white of eggs much cooked
Shone dully everywhere she looked.

She minced up to the counter, said:
"I want three yards of ribbon — red."
Sat down upon a stool and waited.
The tranquil atmosphere vibrated.

I bowed and brought a brilliant red,
Flaming and smooth as though each thread
Were new-run blood or molten glass.
She gave one look and let it pass.

I brought her scarlet, a poppy shade
Hot as a subaltern's cockade,
It darted out between my hands
Like a spurted flame of many strands.

She shook her head and murmured, "Crude."

I brought her a damask whose lassitude
Was of pale boudoirs and midday wakings;
It slid from the roll in languid snakings.

Annoyed, she pushed it to one side.
A clear carnation next I tried,
Fresh as Spring wind. "Oh, no," said she,
And tapped her foot impatiently.

I urged a cardinal crimson — she pouted.
Magenta, vermilion — both were flouted.
Carbuncle, ruby, cinnabar,
The counter looked like a mad bazaar.

One was too dull, the next too gay,
The next she fingered and turned away.
I tried thin ribbons of madder and lake,
Or wide russet sashes I hoped she would take.

I offered maroon with intriguing brightnesses,
I tendered a cherry streaked with whitenesses.
I gave her the claret of evening skies,
The silver-salmon of faint sunrise.

I brought down carmine doubled with gold.
I found pale buffs under which rolled
A faint suggestion of watchet or blue.
Nothing I showed her seemed to do.

I gave her plaid ribbons, chequered, shot.
Always she asked what more I had got.
I proffered striped satins, or grosgrain plain.
Whatever it was, I must try again.

The uncoiled ribbons grew and grew
Until I only saw her through
A hole in the pile. But her voice came clear:
"Have you no more, there is nothing here."

I climbed down ladders with boxes balanced
In either hand. Under the valanced
Counters I dove for still more bolts.
She pronounced all ribbon designers dolts.

Neither colour, nor texture, nor price would suit,
She must see more. So to the root
Of my stock I went, unwinding, displaying —
Her chilly voice simply went on saying

That all was wrong, one way or another.
I began to wonder if I should smother
Under those rubicund twining strips,
When wanly fell from the pursed-up lips:

"You have so little to choose from here,
And what you have so excessively dear,
I will take two packets of pins. Nothing more."

And paying me she tripped through the door.

The sun was setting, the ribbons looked dull,
The heap had assumed the form of a skull.
The hollow eyes winked, the loose jaw made
A grimace at the fool who sold beauty in trade.

The wind whispered under the shop-door sill,
"Loveliness! Loveliness! Where you will.
Make it, give it, but put it on sale,
A bale of goods is only a bale."

The primrose moon through the window-pane
Misted the skull with saffron rain.
Gold as a guinea it lured and shone
At the tradesman standing there alone.
From the old clock tower of carven stone
The hour chimed in a hollow tone,
Three peals of bells for a quarter past one.

THE SEWING-BOOK

I've been reading a book about sewing,
And I look at my useless hands,
They know nothing at all of a needle's going
Over and under through linen strands.

My hands are a foolish sort of toys,
They can hold a pencil, that is all they know.
Now, reading, they would aspire to the joys
Of setting a thousand little stitches in a row.

A row of neat little stitches in some particularly fine
cloth.
Cloth is perhaps sweeter than its grandchild — paper.
But these clumsy hands of mine are worth
Whatever value there is in a sky-scraper
Hewn of cold clouds, airily morticed with grey vapour.

Nainsooks, linen-lawns and cambrics,
Even mercerized cotton has an agreeable style
In reading. My hands build towers of flame-bricks,
But I burn in their fire all the while.

Imbroidering monograms is a cool pursuit, and stitching
A monotonous thing like a hem means rest
I can quite believe, rest uninterrupted by the itching
Torment to mold a weather-cock of fire into a crest.

Is a needle sharper than a pencil? That
Hinges of course on this matter of hands.
A cardinal may be weighed down by his hat,
And a pencil weary for the smooth, white bands
Of a linen cuff, perchance. There it stands.

Two or three spools of coloured thread,

And whatever flower comes into your head
Blooms on the muslin tranquilly,
Evenly patterned as a tree.
I consume with a pencil's lead,
Making a thought, a grief, a laughter.
You will last while fibres hold fibres. I, dead,
Tempt a future of nothing and nothing. No dafter
Aim in the world than that what I have said
May be seeded, harvested, ground into bread
And so on hereafter, and that to be
Till the hungry find nothing to eat in me,
And no fit dwelling in my smouldering towers
Only the crumbling of mouldy hours.
Oh, the peace, the peace of your silken flowers!
The smooth, white dust of your exquisite, faded
flowers!

STILL LIFE

Moonlight Striking upon a Chess-Board

I am so aching to write
That I could make a song out of a chess-board
And rhyme the intrigues of knights and bishops
And the hollow fate of a checkmated king.
I might have been a queen, but I lack the proper
century;
I might have been a poet, but where is the adventure
to explode me into flame.
Cousin Moon, our kinship is curiously demonstrated,
For I, too, am a bright, cold corpse
Perpetually circling above a living world.

BALLAD OF GRINNING DEATH

Upon a decent truckle-bed
A woman lay, and she was dead.
A curtain flapped before a pane
Of glass made sharp and thick by rain.
A mouse ran softly on the floor.
Beyond the rattling attic door,
A wind was moaning more and more,
It wailed as waves against a shore.

A candle with a drowning wick
Swaled in an old tin candlestick.
A haggard man was writing there,
Composing words with dreadful care.
He ran his fingers through his hair,
And sang a song which cut a glare
Like purple lightning through the gloom

Of that wind-muffled, quiet room.

He sang: "Come, comrades, drink it up,
The bubbling, beading, blazing cup,
The licking, glittering serpent wine,
Drink, Bully Boys, the candles shine,
Women, and lights —" The strained voice cracked
Upon a chilly sob which hacked
The melody to bits, and left
Only a poor old man bereft.

He rose and wavered through the room,
His fingers struck upon the doom
Of Death and rang a hollow sound
As pulses beating round and round,
All round and round, but in that place
Where lay her tired, peaceful face,
He knelt as in a neutral space.

He kissed the glassy hands, a moan
Wrenched from him by their feel of stone;
He passed his arms about the thin
Old shrunken form and held it in
His shivering grasp, and called her name,
And told her it was he who came;
He babbled love words, beating them
Harshly against Death's frozen phlegm.

The rain struck loud upon the sash.
Over the roof, the rain-drops' dash
Drew thickly to a single fall
Of water leaping down a wall.
He must not pause, he could not wait,
The hour was growing very late.
The money for the funeral.
He crept back to his blotted scrawl.

And there all night he wept and tore

Out of his bleeding mind a score
Of rousing drinking-songs, that rang
In obscene choruses, a clang
Of goblets clattered through the staves,
And on he wrote as one who raves:
"Drink, Men, for wine is crowning sweet" —
He dropped his head upon the sheet,
He clutched his hands until the bones
Stood out upon the skin like stones,
And cursed God as a frantic child
Screams at a dream. Then, weak and mild,
He pleaded: "Do not leave me, Dear.
Oh, Mary, Mary, can you hear?"
The silence hissed upon his ear.

Then he would jerk upright and sing:
"A ring-a-ding, a ring-a-ding.
For brandy is a handsome thing.
Ale is for topers who have to be careful,

Claret for gentlemen grown somewhat fearful.
Sherry for men with a long roll of yellows,
But brandy and rum for the best of good fellows.
Ho! Boys! Drinking boys,
Clap your glasses and make a noise,
Shouting brandy and rum, Ho! Ho! Ho!
Calling for whiskey and gin." Below
He heard the choking gutters spill,
The wind beyond the door was shrill,
The corpse beneath its sheet lay still.

To him this was not something dead,
He did not know her so. Instead
What lay there was his sleeping wife,
The hair-spring of his dredged-out life,
The reason why his dreams were good,
The springing freshness of his blood.
The edges of his life drew in
And hung about him, curled and thin,

He felt himself an empty shell
Swirled by a wind across a fell,
And Heaven was just a sneer of Hell.

A near-by steeple rang a chime,
For time is time, and passing time,
And wearily he found a rhyme
And nailed it to a loud-laughed jest.
He cursed the man at whose request
The drinking-songs were ordered. Then
He rose and came to her again,
And stood and stifled in his pain.

The near-by steeple chimed and tolled
That life was old and songs were gold,
And drinking-songs were red and sweet,
And morning crawling down the street.
He smoothed her quiet, quiet hair,
He pulled the curtain so no glare

Should be upon her anywhere,
Then took his songs and left her there.

Outside the wind blew sharp and strong.
A dwindled sunlight fled along
The endless streets. He ached for sleep,
His eyes were eyes which may not weep.
He had no thought about it all
But money for a funeral.
His brains were leaping in a fire
To gratify her last desire.
A hearse, a coffin, and a pall
To give her decent burial.
And then the snow began to fall.

POETIC JUSTICE

DOUBLE-FLOWERING trees bear no fruit, they say,
And I have many blossoms,
With petals shrewdly whirled about an empty centre,
White as paper, falling at a whiff of wind.
But when they are gone
There are only green leaves to catch at the sunlight,
Green monotonous leaves
Which hide nothing.

TO FRANCESCA BRAGGIOTTI

After Seeing Her Dance: "Fragrance"

White —
As the dawn on white roses,
Bright —
As sunlight on your rope of roses;
As a feather tossed in the quick of the wind,
As a crystal figure swept by a rainbow rain.
Dancer of silver shadows,
You are all youth and freshness,
Like a sharp spear against ivy,
Like a bow pulled to quivering,
Like an arrow rushed from a shaking bow.
Your arms are gestures of a morning earth,
The arc of your leaping legs a shout of loveliness,
Your movements the shining silence of the on-coming sun.

You dance in the dawn,

You dance over green lawns in a leaf-rhythm,

Weaving patterns with your rope of roses,

Printing a white, fleeting pattern of yourself,

Of your bright body against sudden, startled green.

DANCE FIGURE

I WOULD pray for thunder
Clanging across a copper sky,
For the scissors of the lightning
Rending green clouds.

As a tempest in the tree-tops,
I scream into the fiery wind;
As rain, wing-footed,
I fleet over dim valleys.

I am the silver of storm,
The gold of shuddering mist-tissues
Clouded about the head of that God
Whose name is fury to the world.

Speak, joints,

Wrists, ankles, knee-sockets!

Shout — arms, legs,

Shoulder-reaches and finger-tips!

Cry the song of an iron chariot

Rolling wheel and wheel

Along the wind tracks.

I leap in an angle of lightning.

I bend, spring, glitter,

Ripping the cloud-veils.

Who has seen the passion of my heart?

Are there eyes which can bear the sight of me

Approaching in the darkness?

The black horses snort at my coming,

The trees fling the roses of their leaves before me.

Sing —

While the leaves tear from the trees.

I leap from the heavens —

Shall you not behold me?

Daughter of thunder and the flake of it,
The deep pools wait for me.
I am the flash of a single body
Shivering to a million reflections.

As the thunder walks upon the sky
With steps of brass and ochre,
So I walk,
Upon a tower where no light is,
Slightly gauzed,
A moon whose clouds escape her.

You who desire me,
Where are you that I may reach you?
For whom am I come
If not for you?

Thunder of midnight,
Thunder of the morning,
I have made my waist supple for you.
I have taught my hands an unknown cunning.
My legs are the pillars of a flowing sky.

Dance then,
You who are curved to receive me.
Fling a new shadow from my brightness.
I am as you would have me,
The breaker of moulds and medallions,
Fashioning all things to a heaviness of thunder,
To a glory of unquenchable lightnings,
Whose image shall endure
To everlasting time.

Torch of thunder,
You burn upon the mountains,
And the lesser peaks

Fly up with flame.

Dazzling torch of aconite and silver,

Blaze — flare —

Penetrate the chasms of the great rocks,

The clefts in the mountain sides.

O radiant valleys,

Catch fire and sing with it in your mouths!

Light is forever,

For the fire of the sky has no end.

* * * * *

Thunder-dancer,

I am tranquil,

Tranquil.

Slow drops drip from the trees,

Unevenly falling.

Slowly, with the slow rain-drops,

Dance,

And sleep.

JAZZ DANCE

How-do! How-do!
Pigeon-wing and toe.
Click your heels together
And away we go.
Snappin' our fingers
And slitherin' our feet,
Beatin' out a sugar tune
Sticky and sweet.
Grab your lovely lady
And whirl her off the floor,
Slip and slide her down the room,
Steer her up once more.
Hear the drums a-beatin',
But they're goin' awful slow.
Hit her up, you jazz-men,
We're sleepin' in this row.

What's the bones a-doin'
Blowin' on his thumbs?
Sets my ribs a-jiggin'
To hear them drums.
How-do! How-do!
Out there in the night
All the birds am listenin'
And quiverin' with fright.
I reckon they 'low it's Judgment come
Them rattles is makin' such a terrible hum.
Don't you hear the sizzlin' out in the grass?
It's snakes, Honey, snakes, all a-hustlin' to pass.
They thinks we's devils, with the bawlin' and yellin',
An' they've only got a minute to run away from Hell in.
Watch me playin' possum,
Slinkin' through the crowd.
Peek past the folks, Lamb,
Ain't yo' proud

When I leap up sudden
On a great round swing
With the flicker-flap-flash
Of a woodpecker's wing?
'Pears like you
Is a honeysuckle flower
Smellin' like a bunch of 'em
After a shower.
'Pears like you
Is a great gold queen
Settin' on a high throne
All red an' green.
These here niggers
Am just yo' people,
But I am yo' fancy-man
Tall as a steeple,
With my head in the clouds
Bobbin' roun' an' roun',
An' my feet rejoicin'

At the boom-boom sound.
Step along with me, Honey,
What's the music for?
Your little fire-feet am cracklin',
Snappin' on the floor.
They'm scorchin' my toes
An' burnin' my eyes
An' shootin' an' scootin'
Like they was fire-flies
All a-razzle an' a-dazzle
An' a whirligiggin' wonder,
Mockin' the old jazz drums
Poundin' there like thunder.
Don't you keep me waitin',
Ain't I achin' to begin,
Itchin' for it, Lady Bird,
Like it was a sin.
Your wild-cat eyes is callin' me
They'm clawin' at my face,

I can't stand still no longer,

Jump in an' take your place.

Tickle up your shins, Girl,

Look mighty smart.

Grab me round the waist and — Whoo!

There we start.

How-do! How-do!

Throw your little heels so,

Same as colts do, that's the style.

Double shuffle for a mile.

Swing your hips and bend your head.

Say, the music's all gone dead.

Beat your drums up, player-men,

Do that cake-walk reel again.

Shake the tambourines a bit,

Bang the cymbals till they split,

Throw your drum-sticks up and catch 'em.

We can bunny-jump to match 'em.

Whirl your rattles to a spin,

Prod the fiddler with a pin,
That ole nigger's pow'ful lazy,
Makes us all go just plumb crazy.
Do you hear that shudderin' whine?
There's an owl in the old pine.
Guess he's lonesome all out there
Nothin' roun' but just cold air.
My! it's hot in here an' steamy.
Makes my head go kind of creamy
Seein' that great big flat moon
Galivantin' roun' in tune
Every time we pass the door.
Shoot away now down the floor,
Dizzy, whizzy, loo-for-Lizzie,
Buckle-rappin', tap-tap-tappin'.
Guess my bones am gwine to loosen,
Guess I can't no more be choosin',
Guess I'll dance till Kingdom come,
Guess I need a drop of rum.

Holy Moses! hold me tighter,
'Pears the moon am growin' whiter.
Drum, you niggers, skin yo' wrists,
Ain't we done a heap o' twists!
How-do! How-do!
Heel and toe,
Forty couples in a glow,
Eighty rose-bud hearts a-quakin'.
Looks it might be dawn a-breakin'!
How-do! How-do!
Pigeon-heel and rabbit-toe,
Till the candles all burn low
And the drums am tellin' sleepy
Tappin' ghosty-short an' creepy,
An' a bluejay up an' screeches
Outside in the purple beeches.
Kiss me, Honey, that's all right.
Maybe I'll be round to-night.

PROPER INVECTIVE

Followed by an Aria of Ironic Consequence

Rust, moth, fungus, canker-worm,
Hemlock, nightshade, Upas tree,
All the horrors that there be
Loose upon this pachyderm.

Gods of grottoes, caves, and mountains,
Oracles and visions dire,
Spirits of the air and fire,
Dryads, naiads, nymphs of fountains.

Leave your eagle crags and eyries,
Fly your apple-leaved seclusions,
Bring your dreadfullest confusions,
Mumbled magic misereres.

Spell, and curse, and incantation
Heap upon this froward man,

Every charm and patteran
Use to his complete damnation.

Call in wizards, witches, seers,
With their lore of plant and planet,
Bid them forge a charm of granite
Lasting for a thousand years.

Bid them pick the square-stemmed briars
Out of swamps where vapours ooze,
Watch the faggots that they choose,
Proper for their magic fires.

Watch them come by one and one,
With the fog-web in their hair,
And their yellow eyes astare,
Bearing treasures hardly won.

Slowly tramping round about

The red cauldron, in they drop
Mince and morsel, sip and sop,
Rabbit's paw or weasel's snout.

Snakeskin sloughed at middle moon,
Hair of brindled, five-toed cat,
Spotted burdock which a rat
Gnawed where frosty gibbets croon.

Tail of skunk and owlet's ear,
Earthworms digged from a Jew's grave,
Splinter of a coffin stave
Nicked from off a miser's bier.

Roots of adder's tongue, and yew
Stripped at dawn on Easter even.
"Seven, seven, seven, seven,
Seven stars which buzzed and flew.

Seven devils, flying, dipping,
Diving round the weather-cock
Of the church, while tolls the clock
Seven long strokes without skipping."

Infant's finger singed and brittle
Stuck upon a dragon's fang,
And, to give the brew a tang,
Seven drops of blindman's spittle.

Rumble, rumble, stir the stew
Round and round in widdershins,
Faster, faster, till it spins.
But there's more I'd have you do.

Summon Gods of Ind and Indies:
Thoth, Sesostris, Voodoo, Bel,
With their sorceries from Hell
And their weird outlandish shindies.

Sibyls, with your erudition,
Read him all the sooth and sin
Under his name written in
Your long records of perdition.

Ancient oracles declaim
Fates concealed in dream and trance,
Tragic jests of circumstance.
Speak them smoothly like a flame.

Every rune and every rite
Shower on him, spare not one,
Till from sun to rising sun
Never lived a sadder wight.

Let the spinning shapes of mist
Lure him to high rocky edges
Over surfy seas, let sedges

Hide the river's sudden twist.

Urge him with the voice of lovers
Into fenny bogs and quakes
Where the tufted marsh-mud shakes
And a green light swoops and hovers.

Elves and pixies, pique him, prick him,
Knot the grass to trip his feet.
Goblin, djinn, and black afreet
Pommel, pound, confuse, and kick him.

Star his darkness thick with faces,
Mewing, mouthing, white as yeast;
Bloody lips on which ghouls feast
Leer at him with foul grimaces.

Beetles, bugs, and dragon-flies,
Sting him with your poisoned stings,

Crawling fogs fold your cold wings
Round about his arms and thighs.

Itching fevers, let him be
Your most constant bourn, attend him
With such pangs that they may send him
Forthright to Eternity.

* * * * *

So far done! O Warlocks, Witches,
Thanks. And Gods of cloud and mountain,
And ye nymphs of tree and fountain,
Upland wold and leafy ditches,

I am gratitude unending.
Flit back to your woods and caverns,
Your high palaces, and taverns
Under junipers down bending.

I will lay you jars of wine

At the entrance to your grottoes,
I will carve the trees with mottoes:
Aspen, birch, and scowling pine.

Not a wind shall blow between them
But my words will show the brighter,
Cut through bark to wood that's whiter.
Everyone will soon have seen them.

Everyone will pilgrimage
To your mountains and your rills,
Trampling down the daffodils,
Hauling marble for a stage.

Column, court, and colonnade
Will appear by due degrees,
Overhung with locust-trees
Casting purple pools of shade.

Medals, coins, and carven gems
Will be dropped into your shallows,
Chequered by the brooding sallows
With their pink and silver stems.

Youths and maidens wreathed in crocus
Will parade your solemn larches,
Pruned and fashioned into arches
With the temple as their focus.

All because, you Ancient Spirits,
Sibyls, Oreads, and Elves,
Hoary Gods, you gave yourselves,
Each with his peculiar merits,

To avenge a mortal who
Had received a grievous slight
From a witty, witless wight.
Tell no one what I tell you.

Priests and Vestals shall not know
Why this temple stands to prove
My high gratitude and love.
Why I have proclaimed you so.

Listen then, to solemn truth,
In the arrogance of youth,
What that fellow dared to do:
Write a long, adverse review!

See now, in my rage and rancour,
Goaded by tormenting canker,
What I've done. It might be worse.
Founding creeds upon a curse
Is no new thing, you'll admit.
Take what is and build on it,
Be obliged with what you find,
Wisdom does not pry behind

Any curtain hung between
What is now with what has been.
If you do not wish to see
Your fine temple utterly
Doomed and ruined, never tell.
Gods and oracles, farewell.

DISSONANCE

From my window I can see the moonlight stroking the
smooth surface of the river.
The trees are silent, there is no wind.
Admirable pre-Raphaelite landscape,
Lightly touched with ebony and silver.
I alone am out of keeping:
An angry red gash
Proclaiming the restlessness
Of an incongruous century.

THE BOOK OF STONES AND LILIES

I READ a book
With a golden name,
Written in blood
On a leaf of flame.

And the words of the book
Were clothed in white,
With tiger colours
Making them bright.

The sweet words sang
Like an angel choir,
And their purple wings
Beat the air to fire.

Then I rose on my bed,

And attended my ear,
And the words sang carefully
So I could hear.

The dark night opened
Like a silver bell,
And I heard what it was
The words must tell:
"Heaven is good.
Evil is Hell."

The night shut up
Like a silver bell.
But the words still sang,
And I listened well.

I heard the tree-winds
Crouch and roar,
I saw green waves

On a stony shore.

I saw blue wings
In a beat of fire.
My hands clutched the feathers
Of all desire.

I cried for hammers,
For a hand of brass,
But my soul was hot
As melted glass.

Then the bright, bright words,
All clothed in white,
Stood in the circle of the silver night,
And sang:
"Energy is Eternal Delight.
Energy is the only life."

And my sinews were like bands of brass,

And the glass of my soul hardened and shone

With all fires, and I sought the ripeness of sacrifice

Across the dew and the gold of a young day.

STALACTITE

I AM a dead thing,
A brittle mummy swathed in canvas,
Gazing with cracked, painted eyes
At a high dome above a still hall.
There is thunder,
And I hear it;
There is lightning,
And I see the tongues of it;
There are many bodies beside mine,
And I see them too.
I died a thousand years ago,
And yet I remember long since,
Drifts of ages since,
Watching,
With other eyes than these,
Diana gathering white poppies upon a seaside hill.

THE SPLENDOUR FALLS FROM CASTLE WALLS

(Adapted from Tennyson)

THE windows of the gallery
Are tall, with rounded tops, so high
They cramp the ceiling. Through their panes,
Fogged and streaked with dust and rains,
An August sunshine slants and veers
Over the walls and the chandeliers
Of faceted crystal, but scarce a gleam
Can these give back, the ancient dream
Of dust is on them. The sunlight floats
On a stream of dust, the dropping motes
Sift like mist through the empty room
Filling it with a golden bloom.
The moth-eaten velvet of the chairs
Placed along the walls in pairs
Is pitilessly obvious,
The gilded arms and legs are worse,

Scaled to the wood. All is hushed and bright,
An ancient splendour crushed with light,
An aristocratic refinement, lying
Bare to the eyes in the act of dying.
Not a sound from the courtyard, not a bang
From a distant door. The pictures hang
Undisturbed, the scenes they show
All occurred so long ago
They are nothing to nothing.
But how fresh the paint
Upon armoured hero and martyred saint.
How steadily the pennants curl
From the masts of battleships! How they whirl,
The javelins on that brazen gate!
Here is passion coagulate,
Stiffened at its highest flux,
An agony not worth the chucks
Of a copper-coin, or the bandolier
Of a sixteenth century cavalier.

What knots of roses these battles were
To the painter commissioned to disinter
A thousand graves and decorate
One general at his moment of spate.
How gaily and safely they plied their trade,
Turning a fight to a harlequinade,
A holocaust to a pirouet.
What of the blood, the groans, the sweat,
The squeal of wounded horses, the cries
Of disembowelled companies —
What, think you, becomes of these
On his commissioned canvases?
Blow the trumpet! Bang the drum!
Tootle the fife! The armies come
Home from the wars, and what did they
Do there, painter, can you say?
Of course he can, he's the man to tell
What he's never seen, he imagines so well.
In his picture, cavalry advance

To the jaws of cannon, so sprightly a prance
Shows the rose-wreath courage of horses and men.
One cannon ball has just slain ten,
Another is bursting like a rocket
An inch beyond the embroidered pocket
Of a gold-laced gentleman, unconcerned
By the fact that his uniform may be burned.
His noble horse, on hind legs only,
Dashes ahead of the troop in lonely
Magnificence. Earthworks bar the way,
But what of that? This is Malplaquet
With Marlborough rampant. Hooray! Hooray!
I am almost inclined to toss my hat
Up on a chandelier for that.
Such a roseate riot of marshal exploit!
A leader so bold, well-dressed, and adroit
At high-school horsemanship, one of the true bits
Of earth's tempered metal; why even his cubits
Outspan those of any behind him that drew bits

And gave him his distance to open the breach
In fiery solitude. What do they teach?
"Marlbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre!" Such is speech;
Even I am ignited.
A curious sound,
Something between a step and a pound,
Startles my trance. A man comes in,
A pallid person, and so thin
His bones crook the angles of his dress.
He limps, poor soul, and his breathlessness
Is pitiable, after his climb
Up the slippery stairs. It is closing time
He tells me dully. But I beg
Him to sit and rest. His wooden leg
Is a heavy burden, I suppose.
He shakes his head and slowly goes
On his round of closing the high windows.
"It's nothing, Sir, I've got the use
Of this timber now. They cooked my goose

When they conscripted me. If I'd known
In time I'd have broke my leg with a stone
Rather than this. I've a churlish bed
To lie on, but what's done is done," he said.
A miserable philosophy
To catch a man so young as he.
I risked a question gingerly.
"Yes, Sir, a wife and youngster, so
I got this job. It's all I can do.
Damn beastly business, war!" He spat
A curse or two, and after that
He moved to show me out, but when
I asked his age, he spat again
Another curse: "That's it, Sir, see,
I'm only just gone twenty-three."
I gave him silver. His stump came fainter
Round the corner of the kitchen wing.
Coincidence is an eery thing —
As I walked away, I damned that painter.

SONGS OF THE PUEBLO INDIANS

SONGS OF THE PUEBLO INDIANS

I

Women's Harvest Song

I am waving a ripe sunflower,
I am scattering sunflower pollen to the four world-
quarters.
I am joyful because of my melons,
I am joyful because of my beans,
I am joyful because of my squashes.

The sunflower waves.
So did the corn wave
When the wind blew against it,
So did my white corn bend
When the red lightning descended upon it,
It trembled as the sunflower
When the rain beat down its leaves.

Great is a ripe sunflower,
And great was the sun above my cornfields.
His fingers lifted up the corn-ears,
His hands fashioned my melons,
And set my beans full in the pods.
Therefore my heart is happy
And I will lay many blue prayer-sticks at the shrine
of Ta-wa.

I will give corn to Ta-wa,
Yellow corn, blue corn, black corn.
I wave the sunflower,
The sunflower heavy with pollen.
I wave it,
I turn it,
I sing,
Because I am happy.

II

Basket Dance

Dance!

Dance!

The priest is yellow with sunflower meal,

He is yellow with corn-meal,

He is yellow as the sun.

Dance!

Dance!

His little bells are ringing,

The bells tinkle like sunlight,

The sun is rising.

Dance!

Dance!

Perhaps I will throw you a basket,

Perhaps I will throw you my heart.

Lift the baskets, dancing,

Lower the baskets, dancing,

We have raised fruits,

Now we dance.

Our shadows are long,

The sunlight is bright between our shadows.

Do you want my basket?

Catch it!

Catch it!

But you cannot catch me,

I am more difficult.

III

Women's Song of the Corn

How beautiful are the corn rows,

Stretching to the morning sun,

Stretching to the evening sun.

Very beautiful, the long rows of corn.

How beautiful is the white corn,
I husk it,
I grind it.
Very beautiful, my white corn.

How beautiful is the red corn,
I gather it and make fine meal,
I am glad doing this.
Very beautiful, my red corn.

How beautiful is the black corn,
I give it to my father,
To my mother,
I give it to my child.
Very beautiful, the black corn.

How beautiful is the mottled corn,
Like the sky with little clouds,
I eat it looking at the sky.

Very beautiful, my mottled corn.

IV

Prayer for a Profusion of Sunflowers

Send sunflowers!

With my turkey-bone whistle

I am calling the birds

To sing upon the sunflowers.

For when the clouds hear them singing

They will come quickly,

And rain will fall upon our fields.

Send sunflowers!

V

Prayer for Lightning

My corn is green with red tassels,

I am praying to the lightning to ripen my corn,

I am praying to the thunder which carries the light-

Corn is sweet where lightning has fallen.

I pray to the six-coloured clouds.

VI

Flute-Priest Song for Rain

Ceremonial at the Sun Spring

Whistle under the water,

Make the water bubble to the tones of the flute.

I call the bluebird's song into the water:

Wee-kee! Wee-kee-kee!

Dawn is coming,

The morning star shines upon us.

Bluebird singing to the West clouds,

Bring the humming rain.

Water-rattles shake,

Flute whistles,

Star in Heaven shines.

I blow the oriole's song,
The yellow song of the North.
I call rain clouds with my rattles:
Wee-kee-kee, oriole.
Pattering rain.

To the South I blow my whistle,
To the red parrot of the South I call.
Send red lightning,
Under your wings
The forked lightning.
Thunder-rattles whirl
To the sky waters.
Fill the springs.
The water is moving.
Wait —

Whistle to the East
With a magpie voice:

Wee-kee! Wee-kee-kee!

Call the storm-clouds

That they come rushing.

Call the loud rain.

Why does it not come?

Who is bad?

Whose heart is evil?

Who has done wickedness?

I weep,

I rend my garments,

I grieve for the sin which is in this place.

My flute sobs with the voice of all birds in the water.

Even to the six directions I weep and despair.

Come, O winds, from the sides of the sky,

Open your bird-beaks that rain may fall down.

Drench our fields, our houses,

Fill the land

With tumult of rain.

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09772 326 4